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ABSTRACT

Exercises and techniques are presented which will help young people and adults working in youth-serving organizations develop cooperative work relationships. Youth empowerment is defined as the process by which young people learn, through active participation in the relationship, events, and institutions that affect their lives, to develop and apply their capacity to transform themselves and the world in which they live. Following an introduction, which examines the how and why of youth empowerment, three kinds of training exercises are provided. The first set will help adults examine their personal attitudes toward power and the nature of their interactions and communications with youth. The second group of exercises will help adults assess power relations within their agency, develop agency roles for youth, and initiate youth into decision-making roles in the agency. The last group of exercises are aimed at creating opportunities for social action and involving youth in the larger community. The type of information provided for each exercise includes purpose, material/space needs, suggested time, and how to facilitate the exercise. The guide concludes with an annotated bibliography. (RM)

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# YOUTH EMPOWERMENT:
# A TRAINING GUIDE

SP041412

June 1982

National Commission on Resources for Youth
605 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02215

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON RESOURCES FOR YOUTH, INC. was founded in 1967 as an independent, non-profit organization to expand opportunities for young people to assume active, responsible roles in their communities--what NCRY calls Youth Participation. In programs of Youth Participation, youth gain direct experience in the real world, making decisions, working in partnership with their peers and with adults, and meeting genuine community needs. A comprehensive Youth Participation program also provides for youth to reflect critically on their experience, and to study related subject matter. NCRY seeks out, promotes and assists Youth Participation programs that recognize the capabilities and developmental needs of young people.

Bruce Dollar, Project Director
Peter Kleinbard, Executive Director

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June 1982

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## PREFACE

Each year brings warnings of a new crisis among America's adolescents: drug abuse, alcohol abuse, early pregnancy, suicide. Despite the pain that young people experience and the enormous expenditures to remedy each problem, there seems to be little improvement. Some studies indicate that the number of young people in trouble is increasing rather than diminishing.

It is clear that the yearly crises are symptomatic of a few larger problems in the transition of young people to adulthood in a modern industrial society. *Youth Empowerment: A Training Guide* is intended to help in overcoming one of those problems, the lack of significant and valued roles for young people in our institutions.

Since 1967, the National Commission on Resources for Youth has identified and promoted programs that provide young people with opportunities to assume active and contributing roles in their schools and communities. The Commission believes that young people must have real responsibilities, carrying out tasks that are needed by their communities. Without such opportunities, young people are forced to the periphery of community life and into passivity. When people feel useless, they are more likely to turn against themselves and their neighbors.

The Commission has studied thousands of programs and developed several national demonstrations. We believe that certain elements are essential if we are to change the relationship of adolescents to society in a healthy way:

-Young people perform work that benefits others

-They reflect upon and discuss their work

-They work collaboratively with adults and peers

-They plan and make decisions about programs in which they participate.

*Youth Empowerment: A Training Guide* focuses on the latter two components: collaborative relationships with adults and planning and decision-making by adolescents. The *Guide* is a technical resource to help young people and adults develop cooperative work relationships, and to help young people assume significant and responsible roles. When utilized, the exercises contained in the *Guide* will sharpen understanding of the youth-adult relationships in community agencies and suggest new ways to organize them. Many practitioners have asked *NCRY* for help in strengthening these aspects of their programs. It is not surprising that there should be such a need. Most adults have little experience of sharing decision-making power with adolescents. Many do not want to do so. Many young people are fearful of taking responsibility, having had little experience of it. A great deal of energy must be given to training young people to assume responsibility and carry through complex tasks; equal effort must go into training adults how to share power and support young people in new roles. Technical resources such as this booklet are useful when staff are comitted to significant youth involvement.

But the effort, if given time to succeed, will bring rewards. Young people will develop commitment to the program and initiate beneficial projects of their own. Adults will be free to focus on the tasks that they do best. Finally, programs in which there is collaboration between adolescents and adults will serve as models to others and help to build healthier relationships between generations. Such relationships will not be without problems, for generational conflict is as old as humankind. But they will provide a means to channel that conflict and to assure that it produces learning and growth.

This manual is one of a series produced to help practitioners develop what *NCRY* calls Youth Participation programs. We have also prepared case studies describing effective programs. These describe program activities, structures for youth-adult cooperation and strategies for transmitting these structures from year to year. The *Guide* complements these descriptions of projects and should be used in conjunction with them.

**********

*Youth Empowerment* was developed and written for the Commission by Michelle Whitham. Currently an instructor in the Office of Field Studies at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, Ms. Whitham has often advised the Commission about programs that enable young people to assume significant social roles. She has developed several excellent programs herself, including the Learning Web and The Customs Carried On.

The idea for this booklet originated in the Chicago Idea Exchange, a collaborative of Chicago - area Youth Participation projects, foundations, and public agencies convened by the Commission in the winter of 1980. The purpose of the Idea Exchange is to share knowledge and resources in order to strengthen Youth Participation in Chicago and elsewhere. Idea Exchange members identified two areas for resource development: youth empowerment and evaluation. *NCRY*, in consultation with the Chicago programs, produced the materials: first a handbook on how to evaluate Youth Participation programs and then the current booklet.

Members of the Idea Exchange are:

Alternative Schools Network
Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center
the centre inc. (including Pencil Pushers and Project CHANGE)
Chicago Community Trust
Community Extension Project
Community TV Network
Cook County Sheriff's Office Youth Services Department
Jane Addams Center Youth Department
Joyce Foundation
Local Motion
Major's Office of Employment and Training
Stone Foundation
Youth Communication/Chicago Center
Youth Network Council of Chicago

Luis Miranda developed a concept paper on youth empowerment and conducted interviews at Chicago Idea Exchange projects that were helpful in formulating a conceptual framework for this guide. Helen Reif of the Stone Foundation also provided helpful suggestions.

These youth and adults from the following Chicago-area projects contributed time and effort to field test the exercises included in this guide:

> From Jane Addams Center Youth Department: Karen Denean Ambrose, Beth Montgomery, Rosa Molina and John Toth, and other Youth Department staff.
>
> From the Cook County Sheriff's Youth Services Department, Maureen O'Hara, Karen Popowski, and other Youth Services Department staff, and SPACE (Substance Peer and Community Education) youth staff.

The author wishes to thank especially Karen Carr, Anne Cassiday, Jesse Keefe, Ethan Connor and David Connor for their assistance and support throughout the preparation of this guide, and Mark Rosenman for his ideas on education and empowerment.

Besides participating in the Idea Exchange, two foundations provided financial assistance for the development and production of the *Guide*: the Joyce and Stone foundations. Their assistance was consistent with their history of helping programs that enable young people to assume leadership roles in their communities.

Finally, I want to thank the NCRY staff persons who revised, edited, typed and supervised the production of this booklet: Mae Boswell, Bruce Dollar, Howard Harrington, Ellen Lippmann and Hortensia Mattei.

Peter Kleinbard
Executive Director
June 1982

# WHAT IS YOUTH EMPOWERMENT?

## INTRODUCTION

If you work in a youth-serving organization, and you believe that youth should exercise real power and responsibility within your agency and in the wider community, then this manual was written for you. You may be an adult or a youth member of your agency's professional, para-professional, or volunteer staff. Your agency may be filled with people committed to participation by youth or you may be the only such person there. You may already have well-developed ideas for how to involve youth in serious agency and community roles or you may have just begun to dream about this happening. Regardless of these circumstances, if you have a vision of youth's becoming directly involved in their communities as productive workers, as change agents, as advocates for themselves and for others, then the ***what, how and why*** of "youth empowerment" should provide you with a powerful tool for achieving your dream.

## DEFINING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, as defined in this manual, IS THE PROCESS BY WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN, ***THROUGH ACTIVE PARTICIPATION*** IN THE RELATIONSHIPS, EVENTS, AND INSTITUTIONS THAT AFFECT THEIR LIVES, TO DEVELOP AND APPLY THEIR CAPACITY TO TRANSFORM THEMSELVES AND THE WORLD IN WHICH THEY LIVE. This definition of empowerment encompasses several critical ideas about youth and their relationships to adults, as well as about power and the processes through which an individual becomes powerful:

"LEARN ***THROUGH ACTIVE PARTICIPATION*** IN THE RELATIONSHIPS, EVENTS, AND INSTITUTIONS THAT AFFECT THEIR LIVES."

"Youth empowerment" assumes that the most pressing need of youth, if they are to become responsible adults, is for opportunities to develop ***for themselves,*** through ***interaction*** with the adult world, ***knowledge*** of their own skills, abilities, and interests.

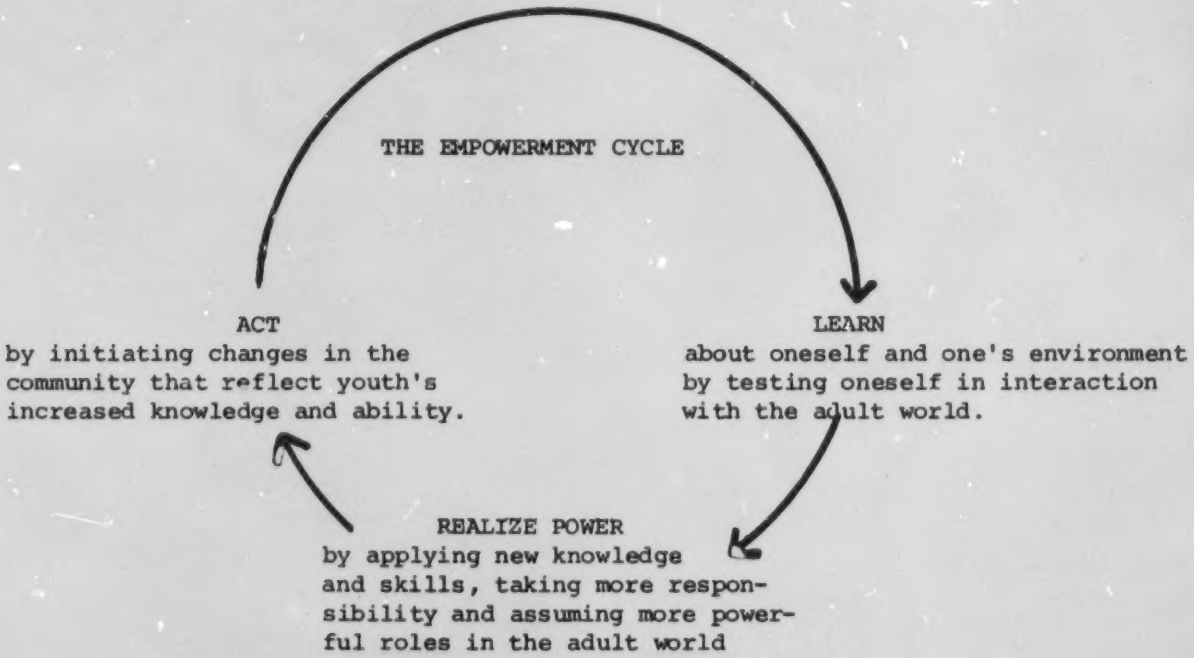
"TO DEVELOP AND APPLY THEIR CAPACITY."

If youth are to have access to the experiences so crucial to their full development as self-directed, socially responsible human beings, ***adults must share power.*** This means giving up the monopoly of opportunity--to make decisions, to work, to try, to fail and try again--that adults have enjoyed by virtue of their age and experience.

"TO TRANSFORM THEMSELVES AND THE WORLD IN WHICH THEY LIVE."

> Youth who have access to active participation not only will gain greater control of their own lives, but also will learn to act more effectively with others in shaping the communities in which they live.

"Youth empowerment" thus describes the *participatory process* through which committed adults *support and challenge* youth to ask and answer questions about themselves, to define their own needs and the best strategies for meeting those needs, and to test this developing sense of self in a world that is transformed by their actions upon it:


THE EMPOWERMENT CYCLE
ACT
by initiating changes in the community that reflect youth's increased knowledge and ability.
LEARN
about oneself and one's environment by testing oneself in interaction with the adult world.
REALIZE POWER
by applying new knowledge and skills, taking more responsibility and assuming more powerful roles in the adult world

"Youth empowerment" is ***NOT*** just about personal growth and individual change. It is ***NOT*** something that can be understood apart from an analysis of the social structures that rob youth of the power to shape their lives. It is ***NOT*** something that can occur in isolation from other people. Ultimately, "youth empowerment" is about changing individuals so that they can change their world.

## HOW IS YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ACCOMPLISHED?

**What Adults Must Do.** "Youth empowerment" has important implications for what adults must do if they hope to facilitate the personal and institutional changes that must occur for youth to have real power in the world. Specifically, adults must:

a. be committed to fostering individual growth by giving authority and responsibility to youth as their personal capabilities increase.

b. work to change the relationships between youth and adults that inhibit such growth.

c. work to restructure their organization so that meaningful roles are available to the young people in their program.

d. promote youth involvement in the community in activities that enhance their position in society and contribute visibly to the public good.

Of these four empowering activities, the first, fostering individual growth, has already been much written about in the human relations training literature under such headings as "assertiveness training," "leader effectiveness training," "decision-making," "creative problem solving," "building self-esteem," and a host of other topics related to the general theme of "realizing your full potential."

Indeed, if you have not already begun to incorporate the principles and practices of such training into your work, you may want to orient yourself to the process of "youth empowerment" by studying the materials contained in the Bibliography.

Although personal growth and development are the cornerstone of the empowerment process, this manual quite deliberately focuses on training activities designed to ***restructure the environment in which youth work,*** an approach that is largely missing in the training literature cited above. The assumption behind this approach is a straightforward one: Until youth gain a measure of real ***power in their relations with adults and in roles in their agency and community,*** no amount of "self-actualization" on the part of individuals will make youth empowerment a reality. Thus the "how" of youth empowerment as presented in ***Youth Empowerment: A Training Guide*** focuses on providing you with materials that will challenge you to change your own, your agency's and your community's structural relationships to youth.

Practical Components of Youth Empowerment: Drawing From Experience.
Before plunging into these training activities, you may find it useful to reflect briefly on some concrete examples of how other youth-serving agencies have organized themselves to empower youth. Although such programs exist across the country, one particularly rich cluster of agencies that consciously view their work in terms of empowerment is found in the informal consortium of youth-serving programs known as the Chicago Idea Exchange. While their programs are diverse and their agencies are unlike each other, a close examination of their interactions with youth reveals a *core of activities* that embody the definition of youth empowerment. Based on information supplied by these agencies in written documentation and personal interviews, the following activities define the "how" of empowering organizations:

1. Individualized, Experiential Programming
2. Developmental Sequencing of Youth Participation Activities
3. Opportunities for Decision-Making and Power-Sharing
4. Adult-Youth Partnership
5. Opportunities for Reflection and Evaluation
6. Training that Enhances Youth's Access to and Control Over Society's Tools and Resources
7. Involvement of Youth as Change Agents in Their Communities

**********

1. Individualized, Experiential Programming.

More than anything else, programs that set out to empower youth emphasize an individualized approach to programming. When a youth first joins one of the agencies of the Chicago Idea Exchange, often there is no pre-defined role waiting. Instead, individual young people are helped to clarify their personal goals, identify their own needs and interests, and assess their strengths and weaknesses in the light of their personal aspirations. In the words of Jack Wuest, Director of the ***Alternative Schools Network:*** "The first step to empowerment really is personal... The place to start is in some small way to help people sort out their lives by creating situations that allow youth to succeed, nurturing personal power, the power of taking a little more control over your life--of getting up, going to school, reading, learning you have a future--of grasping part of your life."

The *Jane Addams Center Youth Department's Job Readiness Program* is a model youth employment program operated by five CETA-paid youth who are involved in virtually every aspect of the program's day-to-day operations. This includes peer counseling, providing job information and referral, and preparing other youth for job interviews and placement. Each of these young people helped to create his or her own job description by working with the program's adult facilitator to identify personal strengths and weaknesses and to forge these into a realistic work assignment.

*Local Motion* is a community-based organization dedicated to helping young people to develop "a sense of self-worth, a feeling of responsibility, and the ability to move toward a fulfilling life." Local Motion accomplishes this purpose through neighborhood drop-in centers that serve as central locations for youth to gather and plan their own activities. With the support of Local Motion's staff of trained social workers, Chicago youth, many of whom are gang veterans recruited directly off the streets, meet to design and carry out such diverse activities as camping trips, sports competition, peer counseling programs, neighborhood beautification projects, and investigations of local history and government.

The approach taken by the Jane Addams Center and by Local Motion is the essence of youth empowerment through individualization of program. They have involved youth in an issue that is of direct personal relevance to their lives (such as youth employment or the planning of recreation activities), then assisted them in carving out active, significant roles for themselves in a program designed to address that issue. In doing so, these agencies have guided youth in taking that first, manageable step toward empowerment.

## 2. Developmental Sequencing of Youth Participation Activities.

Empowerment involves the use of successful experiences of controlling one's own life, and of dealing with barriers to that control, to learn how to deal with power relations in the community as a whole.

For youth to generalize their power in this way, they must experience an increasingly complex and demanding sequence of significant roles in their agency. The adult staff of the Chicago Idea Exchange describe this as blending "support and challenge" or "freedom and creativity with responsibility." At its most basic, this developmental sequencing takes the form of the norms for attendance established by the *Jane Addams Center's Job Readiness Program:* "Attendance is a must. We don't nag them. We support them to come. Someone will call if they don't come, or visit them, or pick them up." Clearly, here is a sensitive blending of support and challenge: the challenge of meeting a difficult, but simple and necessary, expectation, coupled with the personal support needed by

individuals if they are actually to accomplish it. A more complex example of such developmental sequencing is provided by the carefully planned structure for involving youth--at increasing levels of commitment, in increasingly complex roles--that has evolved at *Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center:*

The pattern for promoting youth as active participants in the systems which affect them has generally involved the following:

1. Youth becomes aware of Aunt Martha's via receiving services, through friends involved with Aunt Martha's, or through general community public relations about Aunt Martha's;

2. Youth desires to volunteer in one of the program areas;

3. Youth participates in a weekend training program on communication skills and counseling theory and technigue for community volunteers;

4. Youth donates time as a volunteer to one or more programs at Aunt Martha's;

5. Youth seeks out or is selected for additional responsibilities at the agency--program planning, appointment to the Board of Directors, etc.;

6. Youth participates with other volunteers and staff in state or national workshops and conferences which increase his or her knowledge base and consciousness of youth issues;

7. Youth becomes able, with the continued support of the agency, to function as an effective member of planning and policy-making boards outside the agency.*

By thus systematically providing opportunities for new learning and continued growth, Aunt Martha's operationalizes the empowerment process in a simple formula: As youth's personal knowledge and self-confidence increase, there is always an opportunity provided for successful action at a somewhat more sophisticated level of involvement, thereby gradually moving individuals from a state which focuses on personal growth and development to one of more public responsibility-taking. Developmental sequencing, then, typically begins with opportunities for early, personal successes, evolves into opportunities to participate in a small group or team effort, and finally ends with community involvement in public issues of importance to youth. When properly managed, this approach to empowerment allows youth to take on "reasonable challenge" without sabotaging their efforts by assigning "overwhelming responsibility."

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*From a program description of the Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center, quoted in RFY Report No. XVI A 2, by the National Commission on Resources for Youth, Inc.

3. Opportunities for Decision-Making and Power-Sharing.

If youth are to learn to exercise their individual and collective power responsibly, they must have opportunities to experience and wield authority. Thus agencies seriously committed to youth empowerment not only must provide youth with the chance to be involved as participants in their programs and in their communities; they also must systematically encourage youth to make decisions about the activities they are involved in and to take *responsibility* in regard to issues they consider important. This characteristic of empowering organizations is embodied by the *Youth Network Council (YNC)*, a Chicago-area organization of community-based, youth-serving agencies committed to the belief "that young people are capable of making responsible decisions affecting their lives" and dedicated to supporting youth in "their effort to effectively participate in impacting institutions and systems that influence their lives." YNC is an umbrella agency that facilitates resource exchange, helping member agencies to share information, secure technical assistance, and engage in community outreach vis-a-vis programming for youth participation. Specifically, YNC sponsors two major youth projects. Its *Youth Development Project* initiates "delinquent" youth into the YNC member agencies. Once trained, these youths work in their agencies either to provide services directly to youth or to enhance youth's standing in these member agencies and in the communities the agencies serve.

Youth who function successfully in the Youth Development Program may go on to join the *Youth Committee*, a body of 30 to 40 young people which provides youth program assistance for all of YNC's member agencies and whose chairperson sits on YNC's Board of Directors. YNC sees this committee as a power base for experienced youth "to have as much impact as possible" on the member agencies of the YNC, pushing them to provide more consistently for youth participation in decision-making in their programs.

Youth who have come up through this system are also eligible to work directly for the Council itself - as, for example, coordinators of the *Youth Center Fund (YCF)*. The YCF staff control funds provided by the YNC to support local youth participation projects. In dispersing these funds, the young people draw up annual guidelines for proposals and devise a fund disbursement process.

Finally, the YNC is consistent in enforcing its guiding principles upon itself by requiring that one third of its own Board of Directors be youth.

Youth affiliated with the YNC coalition are provided with real opportunities for decision-making at every level of their involvement in YNC-sponsored activities, culminating in participation in such truly powerful roles as planners, funders, and policy-makers. In this way, the YNC requires itself to build its programs on the experiences, priorities, and perceptions of its youth participants, concretely sharing control of the YNC with them in the process.

## 4. Adult-Youth Partnership

The process of empowering youth by encouraging them to discover and experiment with their power in the context of agency programs implies a very special relationship between adult and youth participants in empowering organizations. This "partnership," as it is consistently named by participants in the Chicago Idea Exchange, is eloquently described by David Weinberg, Director of *Local Motion:*

> *These are not adult-child relationships; rather they're peer relationships. Relationship-building is the key. Building a peer relationship takes a willingness to learn from young people, to gain from the relationship, too; to be involved. It doesn't mean pretending you're a kid. It means suspending your values and judgments, accepting that you're both fundamentally human beings. It means being genuine.*

As Weinberg suggests, for adults to act successfully in the unaccustomed role of partners to youth they must be thoroughly and respectfully involved with their youth counterparts without surrendering the abilities and insights that they naturally bring to the relationship. At *Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center,* for example, the partnership is forged from a blending of "youth awareness and enthusiasm with adult experience and sophistication." Their program is so democratically governed that distinctions between adult and youth staff are rarely made. Similarly, at the *Jane Addams Center Youth Department,* "adult facilitators" work closely with youth to share the responsibility of running the department. In case after case, adults working in partnership with youth are described as "consistent," "collaborative," "firm," "fair" and flexible." Their presence is clearly felt; their wisdom is clearly acknowledged. Yet adult superiority in the exchange is not assumed; instead, adults must demonstrate their capabilities. For adult and youth alike, in empowering organizations, the right to influence another's work must be earned.

## 5. Opportunities for Reflection and Evaluation.

The empowerment process requires both adult and youth participants to learn from their efforts to control and enhance their lives and to use these learnings to fuel an on-going process of growth and change. Empowering agencies greatly value individual and collective reflection on experiences. But the reflection they practice is not a mental exercise limited to "thinking about" an activity or event in isolation. Rather, reflection that empowers is structured around the giving and receiving of feedback among adult and youth partners who are engaged in a process of mutual support and criticism. Denise Zaccardi, director of the *Community TV Network*, an agency dedicated to enhancing neighborhood people's access to the media, describes her organization's commitment to the reflective process in these terms:

> *The Video Project provides an opportunity for people to reflect--for reflecting on your work and on who you are in relation to others in society. It's a chance to evaluate yourself...(to) experience and move on...*
>
> *In working with the project participants, the staff's role is to provide support and encouragement. A supportive environment that leaves room for failure as well as success is necessary if participants are to learn and grow...Constructive criticism is also an important element in helping young people to develop their skills. The staff works collaboratively with participants--giving them room to learn, grow and make mistakes...*
>
> *A supportive atmosphere, which is not to say a non-critical one, is the basis for the project. Adult and peer support systems--listening and learning together--are what make the project work.*

*The Jane Addams Center* provides a straightforward example of this reflective process. Once a week, members of the *Job Readiness Program's* youth staff meet to review past work with each other. Then they attend full Youth Department staff meetings where they share their plans and concerns with the adult staff. To insure the value of the dialogue that develops in these various sessions, however, the department dedicates one meeting every two weeks to training in problem-solving, leadership and communication skills. Finally, each youth also spends one hour a week in a one-to-one feedback session with a member of the adult staff, discussing areas of growth, job responsibilities, and the goals of the program. By thus combining training in basic communications with opportunities to problem-solve in both face-to-face and large group contexts, the Youth Department has developed a vital model of reflection that combines learning with doing.

## 6. Training That Enhances Youth's Access To and Control Over Society's Tools and Resources.

The capacity to act to change one's world, which is the essence of empowerment, must derive from a mastery of specific knowledge and concrete skills. The agencies of the Chicago Idea Exchange emphasize training in a multitude of practical knowledge and skill areas. They include intra- and interpersonal skills such as assertiveness, general communication and values clarification; basic technical skills such as writing, accounting and problem-solving; and specific, professional skill development in such fields as the broadcast and print media, social science research, and small business administration.

An example of the role of training in promoting youth empowerment is found in *Pencil Pushers Office Supply and Stationery Store*, a project of the *Centre, Inc.* Pencil Pushers is an actual retail trade operation staffed and managed by 12 CETA-paid youth. Since its establishment in early 1980, the store has served as a hands-on training ground for local youth interested in retailing and small business managment. In keeping with principles of youth involvement practice, participants not only have responsibility for the on-going operation of the store, but also participated in initial planning for the project and have responsibility for assessment and revision of the business's format. Thus the training provided by Pencil Pushers is designed to provide youth with real expertise and knowledge without which the power to make decisions would be useless.

The *Cook County Sheriff's Youth Services Department's Survey of Alcohol Use* provides another example of training which resulted in youth's mastering of a typically adult area of endeavor. As with Pencil Pushers, young people had a role in the early stages of this research project, assisting in the design of the survey instrument and developing strategies for its implementation. Having planned the project, youth participants went on to conduct the interviews, code the responses and present the results. In this final stage of the project, the youth participants began to manifest the full extent of their mastery over research concepts. Rather than organizing their data into a traditional, narrative report, these young social scientists presented the information on a deck of cards grasped for display by a soft-sculpture hand. This device, they decided, would make the results of their survey more attractive and accessible to the young people who were the intended audience. By relaxing control over the project as the youth demonstrated their competence, adult advisors trained them in research methods while allowing the youth's perspective to change and embellish the process.

### 7. Involvement of Youth as Change Agents in Their Communities.

In order to empower young people to be effective in their environment, empowering agencies build their programs around activities that involve youth directly in community affairs. Examples of such programming abound among the agencies of the Chicago Idea Exchange: In Aunt Martha's Project *LISTEN*, youth develop and present plays designed to increase community awareness of youth's rights and abilities. In *Youth Communication/Chicago Center*, youth work as reporters, editors, public relations personnel, business managers, researchers, and policy makers for their own newspaper, *New Expression*, through which they express their ideas and concerns to the adult community. *The Alternative Schools Network* has numerous projects that involve youth in productive work relevant both to their own interests and to the needs of their community: food co-ops, home repair businesses, retail stores, day-care centers, restaurants and more. Such activities are the necessary culmination of the empowerment process, for without direct action designed to instill a feeling of relatedness to and responsibility to the community, empowerment is not real.

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TO SUMMARIZE

1. YOUTH EMPOWERMENT: THE PROCESS BY WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN, *THROUGH ACTIVE PARTICIPATION* IN THE RELATIONSHIPS, EVENTS, AND INSTITUTIONS THAT AFFECT THEIR LIVES, TO DEVELOP AND APPLY THEIR CAPACITY TO TRANSFORM THEMSELVES AND THE WORLD IN WHICH THEY LIVE.

    - By *guiding and challenging* individual youth to *master new knowledge, to develop new skills*, to grow, to change, to gain control of their lives.
    - By *creating meaningful agency roles* for them as staff with real responsibility.
    - By *sharing power* and decision-making with them--on committees, on boards of directors, in the planning process.
    - By engaging in *dialogue* with them, in honest *self-criticism*, as *true partners* in their struggle.
    - By creating opportunities for their *direct involvement in their communities* as productive workers, as change agents, as advocates for themselves and for others.

This is the "how" of youth empowerment as practiced by other youth workers. This is the "how" of youth empowerment that has been incorporated into the training exercises of this manual.

2. A word of caution as you think about the seven practical components just described:

   Remember that Youth Empowerment encompasses *a whole series of interrelated ideas* about youth, power, and how best to facilitate youth's exercise of that power in responsible ways. It is neither realistic nor sufficient for you, as a worker in a youth-serving organization, to attempt a simple adoption of the practices described in this text. Instead it is important that you fully understand the concept of Youth Empowerment so that the practices that you engage in flow naturally out of this understanding in a form appropriate to your specific situation. While the seven elements of empowerment cited here are the essence of the Youth Empowerment process, the programmatic examples used to document these points should not be viewed as a formula that can be ritualistically invoked to empower youth. As you consider ways to implement these components in your own program or agency, continually ask yourself, "What are the implications of this for my program? How can I adapt this so as to accomplish it in my own setting?"

## WHY STRIVE FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT?

By now it's probably clear, if it wasn't in the beginning, how much time, thought, and sensitivity are involved in empowering youth. As you read the preceding narrative, you might even have begun asking yourself skeptical questions about this process: "Great theory, but is it reasonable to expect that youth will ever exercise this kind of responsibility in a community at best indifferent and at worst hostile to youth? Never mind the community...What can I accomplish if I'm one of only a few people in my agency willing to attempt anything like this? And if I succeed in empowering the youth in my program, what will become of them when they 'graduate' from the agency to find a world that offers them few opportunities for self-fulfillment? How will I handle the backlash from angry, frustrated, or disappointed youth?"

Certainly there is a "dark side" to youth empowerment, for we do live in a world where the kind of self-direction and committed community involvement that are the ultimate goals of the empowerment process are generally neither sought after nor rewarded. It would be irresponsible, in fact, to rush into empowerment training without carefully considering such issues and weighing their potential effect on the individuals you work with on a person-by-person basis. Yet if empowerment is indeed the process whereby youth develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to *shape their world*, then empowerment training should prepare them to struggle effectively with the very issues that are most often raised as rationalizations for persisting in dominating youth. To protect someone because he or she might get hurt is not a kindness; it simply insures that he or she will never know enough about the world to keep from getting hurt. Remember that to empower youth is to change not only individuals but--through them--the world as well. By becoming active in the community, empowered youth transform it, becoming not victims but shapers of community events. As now-valuable producers of services, policy makers, and advocates for themselves, they will help not only to make the world a better place, but also to contribute actively to the success of your agency in its mission to empower youth.

# THE TRAINING EXERCISES

## HOW TO USE THE TRAINING EXERCISES.

This collection of training exercises is designed to guide you, and the other people in your agency who share your interest in empowerment, in a restructuring of interpersonal, agency, and community relationships. The activities are organized into three sections that are intended to build on each other. They begin with exercises designed to help you to examine your personal attitude toward power and the nature of your interactions with youth, move to activities that help you to create more meaningful roles for youth in your agency, and end with exercises aimed at involving youth in the larger community:

Section I. Developing Individuals: Fostering Adult-Youth Partnership.

Section II. Developing Your Organization: Equalizing Power Relations.

Section III. Developing Youth's Relationship to the Community: Creating Opportunities for Social Action.

Although the exercises are intended as a sequence, you may of course pick and choose among them, according to the needs of your situation.

In each section, you will find that exercises are designed either as simultaneous, parallel activities for adult and youth participants in your agency (coupled with suggestions for how to integrate these experiences), or as adult-youth team exercises. While it would be ideal if everyone in your agency would join you in working toward youth empowerment, this is probably not likely to happen. Nor is it likely that your agency has equal numbers of adult and youth participants to team together in undertaking these training activities, (if indeed you have youth staff at all). What is more probable is that you will adapt these training materials to restructuring your own program or department within your organization, or to transforming your relationships with the small group of youth that you work most closely with. Or perhaps you represent a sub-group of the staff who would like to introduce these concepts as part of an intensive, three-day staff retreat, or as a regular agenda item at your weekly staff meeting. Or, you may be an agency director considering some of these exercises as a way to orient and train your board of advisors.

Whatever the circumstances within your organization, these exercises may be readily adapted to any of the situations described above simply by tailoring the detailed 'Facilitating the Exercise' and 'Trainer Notes' that follow each exercise to the audience at hand. In short, *do not be rigid* in your use of these materials. Borrow the ideas, change them, substitute for them, simplify them, but do let them stimulate you to address the issues creatively. The cumulative effect of these exercises

should be to begin--or to continue--the process of transforming your organization, through the investment of your interest and effort, into one that is consciously structured to empower youth.

Finally, this Training Guide contains detailed notes that make it possible for anyone who is committed to youth empowerment to conduct the exercises. Indeed, rotating the responsibility for leading such activities is another strategy for sharing power in your organization. It is especially recommended that youth be involved as co-trainers, and eventually as independent leaders, of the training exercises. Remember when involving people in the facilitator role, however, that some exercises are more complicated than others and that trainers and activities should be carefully matched according to previous experience and degree of difficulty. As a general rule of thumb, no one should lead an exercise that he or she has not studied carefully and discussed with another interested person or that raises questions that he or she feels unqualified to facilitate. It is better to avoid using certain activities than to plunge ahead thoughtlessly with a discussion that is beyond your capacity.

In applying these materials, however, always remember that a training manual can in no way replace significant and meaningful activity in your daily involvement with youth. To *become* what these exercises can only challenge you to *think about* is the only truly valid outcome of empowerment training.

## Section I. Developing Individuals: Fostering Adult-Youth Partnership.

*"The first step to empowerment really is personal."*

Jack Wuest, Director
Alternative Schools Network

GENERAL NOTES TO THE TRAINER.

Establishing a *climate* of mutual respect and trust between the adult and youth participants of your organization is the interpersonal key to empowerment. This first section of this manual is thus designed to help the members of your agency focus on the ***attitudinal and interpersonal bases of empowerment***. As the introduction describes, youth empowerment begins with the individual, with guiding each youth in the process of taking control of his/her own life, beginning with the most manageable of accomplishments. However, since youth are usually involved in power relations with adults that tend to rob them of such control, they often either don't know what it means to feel and act personally empowered or they have been thwarted in their attempts to develop in this way. Similarly, even the most sensitive of adults fall into the trap of disempowering their adolescent clients and colleagues by unconsciously engaging in behaviors that reveal attitudes of superiority. Thus, on the interpersonal level, the challenge for adults sincerely committed to youth empowerment is to work both to support their youth counterparts in overcoming their feelings of powerlessness and to overcome their own automatic assumption of power in their relationships with youth. In this context, the following exercises are designed to foster co-equal partnerships between the youth and adult participants in your organization by helping them to:

1. Explore their attitudes toward and feelings of power and powerlessness.

2. Understand the ways in which they manifest their assumptions about power in their relationships with each other.

3. Interact and communicate with each other in ways that better support mutuality in adult-youth relationships.

In order to accomplish this purpose, the exercises in this section are grouped into the following thematic areas:

A. Exploring Your Power-Oriented Behavior.

B. Respect Building.

C. Fostering Two-Way Communication: Engaging in Support and Challenge.

Section I.

## PART I-A. EXPLORING YOUR POWER-ORIENTED BEHAVIOR.

Breaking Balloons

The Big Stare

Reexperiencing Adolescence--Imagining Adulthood: A Guided Fantasy

Your Power-Oriented Behavior: A Guided Discussion

# BREAKING BALLOONS*

## Purpose:

- To provide members of your organization with a graphic experience of their personal, power-oriented behaviors.
- To provide adult and youth participants with a graphic experience of how they manifest power and powerlessness in their relationships with each other.
- To encourage participants to express their feelings of and toward power.

## Sequence:

This is the first training exercise in *Youth Empowerment: A Training Guide*. It is a deliberately active, physical, non-mental activity which forces people to demonstrate their power-oriented behavior. It can be used interchangeably with The Big Stare, which accomplishes the same thing in a more interpersonally risky way.

## Suggested Time:

30 minutes.

## Material/Space Needs:

Strong balloons.

String.

An uncluttered space that people can move around in.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

1. Have each participant blow up a balloon and tie it to his or her ankle with a string.
2. Instruct the participants as follows:
   a. At my signal, try to break one another's balloons by stepping on them.
   b. Anyone whose balloon is broken is "out" and must sit on the sidelines.
   c. The last person to have an unbroken balloon wins.

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*Adapted from Johnson & Johnson, *Joining Together: Group Theory & Group Skills. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975, p. 187.*

3. Carefully observe the group as they try to break each other's balloons. Be especially certain to note such behaviors as:

   a. Strategies for protecting one's balloon (e.g. coalition, withdrawal, creative self-defense).

   b. Holding back behaviors (e.g., who avoids whom).

   c. Attack behaviors (e.g., who's out to get whom).

4. Facilitate a discussion of people's observations of and feelings toward the exercise:

   a. What did they *see* happening? How much of what you observed were they aware of? After the group has reported as much as they can, describe to them what you observed, pointing out who behaved in what ways toward whom.

   b. How did they *feel* about what happened? Guide the discussion into such areas as their feelings of power or powerlessness, aggression conflict, defense, defeat, and victory.

5. Ask people to relate what happened in the exercise to their interactions with each other in the agency:

   a. What did they learn about themselves that relates to how they behave in the agency?

   b. What did they learn about others that relates to how they perceive that person in the agency?

   c. What did they learn about the distribution of power throughout their group? What would they like to change about their interactions with their agency partners around the issues of power?

Variations on the Exercise:

1. In order to highlight the issue of adult-youth power imbalances, you could also conduct this exercise by dividing the group into adult-youth teams and asking them to compete first with their age peers. After processing this experience as above, the whole group could then repeat the exercise. In processing this second activity, you should include some discussion of how people's behaviors changed in the mixed group (e.g. adults held back more or tried to win easily, youth were forced to team up to protect themselves, and so forth). In staging the exercise in this way, the ways that adults and youth change their behaviors around each other will become more apparent. Remember, however, that it will also take more time to do it this way.

2. Another variation of this exercise would be to divide the group into an adult team and a youth team competing against each other. This is easily accomplished using different colored balloons. Process as before, adding explicit discussion of how youth felt having to compete openly against an all-adult squad and vice versa.

Trainer Notes:

This exercise is designed to illustrate individual's power-oriented behavior and to bring out whatever power inequities exist in the group. It assumes that true partnership between adults and youth will not be able to develop in your organization as long as people have not explored their feelings about power and have not had their unconscious, automatic behaviors made explicit. It is *not* aimed at exploring why people behave as they do in power situations or what the legitimate bases of power are. As trainer, your task is simply to make people aware that they do respond in characteristic ways and that this has implications for their ability to function as a partner in the agency.

# THE BIG STARE*

## Purpose:

- To provide the members of your organization with a graphic experience of their personal, power-oriented behaviors.
- To provide adult and youth participants with a graphic experience of how they manifest power and powerlessness in their relationships with each other.
- To encourage participants to explore the issues of dominance and submission and of the ways in which unequal resources affect power relations.

## Sequence:

This exercise covers some of the same territory explored in the Breaking Balloons exercise in that it will enlighten participants as to their power-oriented behavior. It has the added characteristic, however, of confronting people with their willingness to use their power directly to dominate another person. While the Breaking Balloons exercise allows your entire staff to see the distribution of power throughout the group, The Big Stare will raise the issue of how individuals have learned to marshall their resources to control someone who has fewer interpersonal resources. This exercise could be substituted for the other, or could be used as a follow-up to it without being redundant.

## Suggested Time:

30 minutes.

## Material/Space Needs:

Sufficient chairs so that there is a seat for everyone in the group.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

1. Ask people to pair off (in adult-youth teams if the composition of the group allows) and sit in chairs facing one another, arranged so that they are not distracted by other pairs.
2. Tell them that each pair has five minutes to decide, nonverbally, who is going to sit on the floor. At the end of this time, someone *must* be on the floor.

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*Adapted from Johnson & Johnson, *Joining Together: Group Theory & Group Skills*, Englewood, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975, p. 227.

3. After the time has elapsed, ask people to discuss in the large group what has just occurred.

   a. Why has the person on the floor ended up there? What behaviors has the dominant person engaged in to accomplish his or her purpose of staying seated? What behaviors did the submissive person engage in that landed him or her on the floor? Did any pairs end in a standoff, with both partners on their chairs or on the floor? What led to this outcome?

   b. What was each person feeling as he or she tried to dominate the other? Explore with people their feelings of anger, anxiety, frustration, etc., as they participated in the exercise.

   c. What trends emerged in the group as a whole? Did adults tend to dominate? Teens acquiesce? Were some people willing to move to the floor because they felt confident and didn't need to win such a test of wills to feel strong? What conclusions would participants reach about how unequal personal resources affected the outcomes of this exercise? What conclusions would you reach about the potential for adult-youth power inequities existing in your organization? Does your experience in this exercise remind you of anything--a specific event, interaction, etc.--that has actually happened to you in the agency?

   d. What conclusions would participants reach about why they paired off initially as they did?

4. Ask people to relate what happened in the exercise to their interactions with each other in the agency:

   a. What did they learn about themselves that relates to how they behave in the agency?

   b. What did they learn about others that relates to how they perceive that person in the agency?

   c. What did they learn about the distribution of power throughout their group? What would they like to change about their interactions with their agency partners around the issue of power?

## Variations on the Exercise:

It would be possible to expand this exercise to include a beginning activity that pairs adults with each other and youth with each other. This approach would do more to illustrate individual's power-oriented behavior with "peers," less to illustrate the power dynamic that exists between adults and youth.

Trainer Notes:

This exercise, like the Breaking Balloons exercise, is designed to confront people with their own power-oriented behavior, their desire for or inability to exercise power, their lapses into power as the exercise of raw authority, even their deliberate abdication of power as an expression of a more personal,inner strength. Your task as trainer in facilitating both exercises is to help people to recognize and own their power-oriented behaviors and to understand better their feelings about the power issue, particularly as it affects adult-youth interactions. In processing these feelings, be as aware of group members' submissive behaviors as you are of their dominance behaviors. Remember that people often have problems with power and are unwilling to exercise it in this way. The Big Stare raises the further issue of how unequal resources--be they interpersonal skills or, by extension, political, financial, or other bases of power--can be used unfairly to dominate and disempower other people. In general you may wish to expand this discussion to include some brainstorming on the legitimate bases of power, on how people earn the right to exercise their authority. It is important to encourage people to discover the difference between power as the exercise of unearned prerogatives, which serves to disempower other people, and empowerment as the exercise of legitimate control over one's own life, which can be extended to and shared with others. The implication of these exercises is, of course, that adults who dominate their young colleagues in the organization, however benign their motives, undermine the adult-youth partnership that is prerequisite to empowerment and thus subvert the empowering process itself.

## REEXPERIENCING ADOLESCENCE--A GUIDED FANTASY

(OPTIONAL: To be conducted simultaneously with Imagining Adulthood.)

### Purpose:

- To aid adult staff in reexperiencing their own youth.
- To create an immediate feeling of what it is like to be an adolescent.

### Material/Space Needs:

Sufficient, comfortable space to lie down in; newsprint.

### Suggested Time:

45 minutes.

### Facilitating the Exercise:

1. Select an experienced member of the adult staff to act as guide. (A guided fantasy is best led by someone who is patient enough to pace the exercise slowly and calm enough to create a feeling of deep relaxation in the group. Since some participants may come to feel vulnerable in such an exercise, a facilitator who is trusted and respected is also recommended.)

2. After reviewing the exercise briefly with the group, the guide should:

   a. Instruct adult members of the staff to get in a comfortable position (lying or sitting), close their eyes, and relax. (Lead the group through a standard, physical relaxation exercise if you know it.)

   b. Once everyone is comfortable, take them slowly back through the years to their adolescence by asking them to remember different phases of their lives.

      EXAMPLE: What were you doing a year ago? Three years ago? Five years ago? Remember when you were first out of school. Remember your first apartment.

   c. Having led gradually up to their teen years, instruct everyone to remember their adolescence. DO NOT suggest anything at all to them about their teen years. Simply ask them to conjure up a specific memory of themselves as a youth, to see themselves in a particular situation that actually happened. (If the group needs more guidance than this, you may opt to send them back to a particular time and place in their adolescence. Junior high or

high school is recommended, depending on the age of the agency's youth participants.

d. Now help them to explore that memory in great detail by asking them the particulars of the situation they've suddenly found themselves in.

EXAMPLE: Where are you now? What are you doing? Who is with you? What do you look like? What are you wearing? What is your physical appearance? How tall or short are you? Thin or heavy? Are you well developed? How do you feel about your appearance? What are the things you love about the way you look? The things that embarass or annoy you? How do you feel about the people you're with? The thing you've been doing? Why are you where you are right now? Why are you with who you're with? What do you think your parents would say to you if they could see you now? Your teachers? Your friends?

e. After the group has had 10-15 minutes to reexperience this moment in their adolescence, guide them in letting go of the memory and returning through the years to the present.

f. Instruct people to sit up quietly and open their eyes when they are ready.

3. When everyone in the group has returned to the present, ask them to share briefly their memories if they feel comfortable doing so. (It is possible that some people will have too painful or personal a memory to share. If this occurs, make sure those individuals are not in need of personal support before proceeding. If they wish to continue in the group, ask them to try to talk in general terms about their reexperience.) As they speak, the guide should identify the themes that are generally emerging from these individual experiences and write them on newsprint in the front of the room.

EXAMPLES: Feelings of powerlessness, ambivalence toward the opposite sex, physical unattractiveness, etc. Presence/absence of adults in the reexperiences. Feelings of hostility toward dependence.

4. Proceed to discuss generally the insights into their own adolescence, adolescence in general, and their present attitudes towards adolescence gained from these memories. Aid group members in understanding the insights they can apply to their present work from their own experience as adolescents--and to understand the limitations and biases imposed on them by their own pasts.

5. SUGGESTED TIME: 30 Minutes. (OPTIONAL--TO BE CO-LED BY ADULT, YOUTH GUIDES) After the adult staff has processed their memories together, ask them to rejoin the youth staff/program participants and share their memories, feelings, and insights in adult-youth diads. Encourage each pair to compare and

contrast their own memory or present experience of adolescence and their fantasy of or present experience of adulthood.

6. Convene the full group and ask everyone briefly to express the insights that they gained from sharing in their diads.

# IMAGINING ADULTHOOD--A GUIDED FANTASY

(OPTIONAL: To be conducted simultaneously with Reexperiencing Adolescence)

## Purpose:

- To aid youth in clarifying their perceptions of adults and in expressing these attitudes to adults.
- To encourage youth to try to understand why an adult sees the world as he or she does.

## Materials/Space Needs:

Sufficient, comfortable space to lie down in; newsprint.

## Suggested Time:

45 minutes.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

1. Select an experienced member of the youth staff/program participants group to act as guide. (A guided fantasy is best led by someone who is patient enough to pace the exercises slowly and calm enough to create a feeling of deep relaxation in the group. Since some participants may come to feel vulnerable in such an exercise, a facilitator who is trusted and respected is also recommended.)

2. After reviewing the exercise briefly with the group, the guide should:

   a. Instruct youth participants to get in a comfortable position (lying or sitting), close their eyes, and relax. (Lead the group through a standard, physical relaxation exercise if you know it.)

   b. Once everyone is comfortable, instruct them to recall spontaneously any recent interaction with an adult. DO NOT suggest anything at all to them about this experience. Simply ask them to conjure up a specific memory that comes to mind.

   EXAMPLE: Let your mind drift back over the last few hours, days, weeks. Dwell briefly on the different memories of this time that comes into your mind. Now focus on a specific interaction that you actually had with some adult--any adult--in the last few days.

   c. Now help them to explore that memory in great detail by asking them the particulars of the situation they've suddenly found themselves in.

EXAMPLE: Where are you now? Who is with you? What are you doing? What is the adult(s) you're with doing? What do you look like right now? What are you wearing? What expression is on your face? What does the adult(s) you're with right now look like? What is he or she wearing? What is the expression on his or her face? Is he or she sitting or standing? How do you feel about yourself right now? About the person/people you're with? What words would you use to describe your emotions? How do you think the person that you're with feels right now? What do you think he or she is thinking about the situation? Why do you think he or she feels or thinks that? Why are you where you are right now? Why are you with whom you're with? What do you think your friends would say to you if they could see you now? What are you thinking to yourself? What do you think the adult is saying to himself/herself?

d. After group members have had 10-15 minutes to reexperience this moment in their adolescence, guide them in letting go of the memory and returning to the present.

e. Instruct people to sit up quietly and open their eyes when they are ready.

3. When all group members have returned to the present, ask them to share briefly their memories if they feel comfortable doing so. (It is possible that some people will have too painful or personal a memory to share. If this occurs, make sure those individuals are not in need of personal support before proceeding. If they wish to continue in the group, ask them to try to talk in general terms about their reexperience.) As they speak, the guide should identify the themes that are generally emerging from these individual experiences and write them on newsprint in the front of the room.

EXAMPLES: Feelings of powerlessness, anxiety, ambivalence, confusion, safety, etc.

Presence/absence of positive interactions.

Presence/absence of adults in power positions.

4. Proceed to discuss generally the insights that they gained from these memories into their feelings toward adults or what it might be like to be an adult. Aid group members in understanding how they can apply these insights to their present relationships with adults and in understanding the biases they have formed because of such experiences.

5. SUGGESTED TIME: 30 minutes. (OPTIONAL: TO BE CO-LED BY ADULT, YOUTH GUIDES) After the youth staff/program participants have processed their memories together, ask them to rejoin the adult staff and share their memories, feelings, and insights in adult-youth diads. Encourage each pair to compare and contrast their own memory or present experience of adulthood.

6. Convene the full group and ask everyone to express briefly the insights that they gained from sharing in their diads.

## YOUR POWER-ORIENTED BEHAVIOR: A GUIDED DISCUSSION

### Purpose:

- To consolidate participants' insights into the nature of personal power/powerlessness.
- To help adults and youth understand how their power-oriented behaviors affect their ability to act as partners in the organization.
- To explore the bases of legitimate power and the positive ways that leadership can be exercised in adult-youth partnerships to foster youth empowerment.

### Sequence:

This is a summary discussion, designed to help people pull the experiences of the previous exercises together into an understanding of how power affects their relationships with each other to the good and to the ill. It is designed as a time for people to articulate what they've learned and for key concepts to be made explicit.

### Suggested Time:

45 minutes.

### Materials/Space Needs:

Chalkboard or newsprint.

Writing implements.

### Facilitating the Exercise:

This is a full group discussion, to be led using a question and answer format. The most relaxed way to begin is to ask people to brainstorm with you the words that they now associate with the concept of "power." Solicit first their negative feelings about power. Then list the positive aspects of power as they see it. This brainstorm can lead to soliciting ideas from people as to what they feel would be a legitimate exercise of power by the adults in the organization and, on the other hand, by the youth in the organization. What, for example, should adults have the right to control? Should youth? When should adults be allowed to step into situations? When should they refrain from intervening? Similarly, everyone should be asked what would upset them about the way someone might exercise power in the organization. Specific examples derived from the recent history of the agency could be solicited. In general, the notion should be stressed that power is a reality, that it can be used constructively or destructively, and that learning to exercise one's legitimate

power responsibly is the basis of empowerment.

## Variations on the Exercise:

Youth and adults could process the power-oriented behavior exercises separately, then compare notes after 30 minutes.

Section I.

PART I-B. RESPECT BUILDING.

Your Climate-Setting Behavior/Meeting An Adult.

In The City.

Assessing Your Strengths and Weaknesses As A Partner

Reach For The Sky.

## INTRODUCTION TO PART I-B: RESPECT-BUILDING.

Part I-A of the partnership-building section of this manual, "Exploring your Power-Oriented Behavior," was designed to raise directly the issue of power--that it exists in adult-youth relationships, that each individual manifests a characteristic attitude toward power, and that coming to grips with personal power is central to the empowerment process. In Part I-B, we turn to the task of looking more explicitly at the quality of interaction between adults and youth in your organization. The premise behind the exercises in this part of the manual is that the adult members of the organization must consciously work to recognize and change their arbitrary, control-oriented behavior and to respond consistently to youth with an attitude of respect. Similarly, youth must become aware of what their real strengths, that is those capabilities deserving of respect, are and begin to operate out of this power base in their interactions with adults. Only when adults and youth begin to build relationships with each other that are based on mutual respect for recognized capabilities will adult-youth partnerships become a reality. This first exercise, then, is designed to focus on a critical piece of the respect-building process, identifying those adult behaviors that are *interpreted* by youth as damaging to adult credibility or insulting to youth.

# YOUR CLIMATE SETTING BEHAVIOR/MEETING AN ADULT

## Purpose:

- To provide adult staff with insight into what their behaviors reveal about their attitudes toward youth.
- To provide youth with the opportunity to express to adult staff how adult behaviors make them feel.

## Sequence:

Part I of the partnership-building section of the manual, "Exploring your Power-Oriented Behavior," was designed to raise directly the issue of power--that it exists in adult-youth relationships, that each individual manifests a characteristic attitude toward power, that coming to grips with personal power is central to the empowerment process. In Part II we turn to the task of looking more explicitly at the quality of interaction between adults and youth in your organization. The premise behind the exercises in this part of the manual is that the adult members of the organization must consciously work to recognize and change their arbitrary, control-oriented behavior and to respond consistently to youth with an attitude of respect. Similarly, youth must become more aware of their real strengths--that is, those capabilities deserving of respect--and begin to operate out of this power base in their interactions with adults. Only when adults and youth begin to build relationships with each other that are based on mutual respect for recognized capabilities will adult-youth partnerships become a reality. This first exercise, then, is designed to focus on a critical piece of the respect-building process, identifying those adult behaviors that are interpreted by youth as damaging to adult credibility or insulting to youth.

## Suggested Time:

45 minutes.

## Material/Space Needs:

A writing surface and writing implements.

Copies of Your Climate Setting Behavior and Meeting An Adult worksheets.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

1. Before beginning this exercise, study the worksheets to be sure you understand the meanings of all the terms and how to use them.
2. Distribute copies of "Your Climate Setting Behavior Worksheet" to the adults in the group. Simultaneously distribute copies of the "Meeting An Adult Worksheet" to the youth in the group.

3. Tell participants to read the instructions carefully, then complete their worksheets. (Non-readers or non-writers could be teamed with a literate partner who would write for them as they respond verbally.) Emphasize the following in your instructions:

   DO NOT EDIT YOUR RESPONSES. BE CANDID. BE SPECIFIC.

4. Allow everyone 15-20 minutes to complete their checklists. Then ask each adult to pair off with a youth participant and compare notes. Instruct them to report in by first reviewing each other's responses, then talk in some depth about those adult behaviors that the youth partner identified as negative (e.g. insulting, demeaning, anxiety-provoking, etc.). Allow 15 minutes for paired conversation.

5. Reconvene the whole group for a final, 15-minute guided discussion. Focus this conversation around such issues as:

   a. Emerging patterns of youth interpretation of adult behaviors: What are particular adult behaviors that youth tend to experience as disempowering? Condescending? What are particular behaviors that adults are careful to engage in that youth are not particularly attuned to?

   b. Situational issues: What are the circumstances under which a particular behavior makes sense? Should be avoided at all costs?

6. Conclude this discussion by helping the group to contract for the kind of treatment they would like to receive from other people in the organization. First guide youth to ask for what they generally want in their interactions with adults (e.g. Never touch me. Don't hide behind your desk.). Allow a few minutes for adults to respond, clarify, and modify these requests. Then ask the adults to ask for the behaviors they would generally like to see in their interactions with youth (e.g. Look me straight in the eye. Come prepared to our meetings.). Again, allow the youth to respond to these requests. (The contracting process could be carried out in teams instead of in the large group.) Finally, if the situation warrants it, ask the group to brainstorm ways to enforce these requests.

## Variations on the Exercise:

There are several possible variants of this exercise. You could, for example, videotape volunteer youth-adult teams in interaction, then analyze their behaviors in the large group. This would allow you to stop the action to find out what people are thinking/feeling when they engage in certain kinds of behaviors, which would in turn increase participants' sensitivity to the internal dynamics of domination and submission. A technically simpler version of this would be to conduct the exercise as a Fishbowl, with the group observing and reporting on interacting pairs. Another possible approach to exploring the non-verbal bases of disrespect would be simply to ask the youth to think of an adult they feel they have good rapport with, then try to describe to an adult partner

what feels right about the relationship with this person. Adults could respond by sharing with a youth partner their perceptions of a young person that they have known and that they respect.

Trainer Notes:

Above all else, your role in this exercise is to help participants to explore the *subtleties* of their behaviors. Many participants will be unaware of how they act or surprised to hear how their actions are interpreted by others. Exploring situational issues will also be important. Do everything you can to help people *see* how they unintentionally contribute to or collaborate with adult supremacy through their behaviors.

In instructing people for this exercise you may find that you need to orient them a bit to basic non-verbal communication concepts. This should be done simply, by pointing out to them that the things people *do* communicate as much as the things people *say* and by explaining that this exercise is designed to help staff think about what they do in their interactions with each other that are symbolic of the power relationships that exist between them. A few examples of behaviors that are generally interpreted as power and control gestures in this culture (e.g. standing over someone, staring someone down, etc.) could also be presented to or solicited from the group in introducing this exercise. (A wonderful reference for you on this topic is Desmond Morris's beautifully illustrated manual on non-verbal communication, *Manwatching*.) When you hand out the worksheet you should also take the time to make sure everyone understands what the listed gestures are.

At the same time that you orient participants to non-verbal communication concepts, do *not* cast this exercise simply as a look at non-verbal behaviors. Instead remind them that it is designed to help them focus on the non-verbal, conversational, and attitudinal bases of adultism.

WHEN I FIRST MEET A YOUNG PERSON IN THE COURSE OF MY WORK, I . . .

| TYPE OF BEHAVIOR | WHAT DO I DO? | WHY DO I DO THIS? | HOW WOULD A YOUTH INTERPRET THIS? |
|---|---|---|---|
| My Conversational Behaviors<br><br>1. initiate the conversation, consciously let them do it, or let the chips fall where they may?<br><br>2. try to establish an informal or business-like tone?<br><br>3. make personal comments about myself or deliberately maintain a professional distance?<br><br>4. deliberately edit out certain kinds of words (e.g. slang, vulgarisms, etc.)?<br><br>5. deliberately add certain kinds of words (e.g. slang, vulgarisms, etc.)?<br><br>6. speak with a characteristic volume (e.g. deliberately loud or soft)?<br><br>7. establish clear norms for the interaction (e.g. confidentiality, giving feedback, etc.)?<br><br>8. structure in pauses and other opportunities for response? | | | |

OVERALL, I WOULD DESCRIBE
MY CONVERSATIONAL BEHAVIOR AS:

## YOUR CLIMATE-SETTING BEHAVIOR Worksheet

**HOW TO USE THE WORKSHEET:** On the left-hand side of the page is a list of common behaviors that people often automatically engage in when interacting with another person. Such behaviors are often *interpreted* as non-neutral actions, and can color your interaction in ways you did not intend. Distortions are especially likely to occur in an interaction between unequal partners, as in an adult-youth exchange. For each item, indicate those behaviors that you think you *typically* engage in when *meeting a young person for the first time* in the course of your work. Jot down very brief notes explaining why you do these things and how you think a youth would interpret each behavior.

WHEN I FIRST MEET A YOUNG PERSON IN THE COURSE OF MY WORK, I . . .

| TYPE OF BEHAVIOR | WHAT DO I DO? | WHY DO I DO THIS? | HOW WOULD A YOUTH INTERPRET THIS? |
|---|---|---|---|
| My Physical Behaviors | | | |
| 1. touch them physically in some way (e.g. shake hands, pat them on the back, steer them by the elbow, etc.)? | | | |
| 2. sit behind my desk or involve other pieces of furniture/objects in our interaction? | | | |
| 3. fall into a characteristic body posture while we talk (e.g. leaning back, sitting forward, crossing my legs, etc.)? | | | |
| 4. use particular eye movements (e.g. making direct eye contact often, staring out the window, maintaining a fixed stare, etc.)? | | | |

WHEN I FIRST MEET A YOUNG PERSON IN THE COURSE OF MY WORK, I . . .

| TYPE OF BEHAVIOR | WHAT DO I DO? | WHY DO I DO THIS? | HOW WOULD A YOUTH INTERPRET THIS? |
|---|---|---|---|
| My Physical Behaviors (cont.)<br><br>5. use characteristic hand, face, or body gestures (e.g. pointing a finger, smiling, toe tapping, etc.)? | | | |
| OVERALL, I WOULD DESCRIBE MY PHYSICAL BEHAVIORS AS: | | | |

WHEN I FIRST MEET A YOUNG PERSON IN THE COURSE OF MY WORK, I . . .

| TYPE OF BEHAVIOR | WHAT DO I DO? | WHY DO I DO THIS? | HOW WOULD A YOUTH INTERPRET THIS? |
|---|---|---|---|
| My Attitudinal Behaviors<br><br>1. find myself interacting differently with different youth depending on their:<br><br>age, sex, class, color, sexual preference, lifestyle preference (e.g. "hippie," "jock," etc.), legal history, perceived intelligence<br><br>2. find myself interacting differently with them if I have prior knowledge/experience of:<br><br>their parents, their siblings, themselves<br><br>3. find myself being silently critical of them (e.g. their speech, affect, posture, dress, etc.) | | | |
| OVERALL I WOULD DESCRIBE MY ATTITUDINAL BEHAVIOR AS: | | | |

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# MEETING AN ADULT Worksheet

HOW TO USE THE WORKSHEET: On the left hand side of the page is a list of things people often do when they are talking to each other. Depending on who you are and what the situation is, these actions, when directed at you, may make you feel uncomfortable or supported, or you may not notice them at all. On the right side of the page there are descriptions of the different reactions you might have. Place a check in the column on the right that describes how you *most often* feel when an adult who is *not* your close personal friend treats you in the way described. Use the "Comments" column to jot down any strong reactions or feelings you have about any of this.

| ADULT BEHAVIOR | MY REACTIONS: I can't stand this; never do this to me. | This is OK with me; I don't mind. | I like this; it makes me feel supported. | It depends; sometimes it feels OK & sometimes it bothers me. | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PHYSICAL TOUCHING | | | | | |
| Handshake | | | | | |
| Pat on the back | | | | | |
| Tap on the head | | | | | |
| Elbow steer | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | |
| GESTURES & BODY POSTURES | | | | | |
| Points a finger at me | | | | | |
| Leans back in the chair | | | | | |
| Stands over me | | | | | |
| Sits forward in the chair | | | | | |
| Sits close to me | | | | | |
| Crosses arms over chest | | | | | |
| Folds hands in the lap | | | | | |
| Toe tapping | | | | | |
| Smiles often or all the time | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | |
| EYE CONTACT | | | | | |
| Closes the eyes to listen | | | | | |

(OVER)

| ADULT BEHAVIOR | I can't stand this; never do this to me. | This is OK with me; I don't mind. | I like this; it makes me feel supported. | It depends; sometimes it feels OK & sometimes it bothers me. | MY REACTIONS | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EYE CONTACT (Cont'd.) | | | | | | |
| Looks away from me while we talk (e.g. out the window, down at the floor, etc.) | | | | | | |
| Looks me up and down | | | | | | |
| Stares past me | | | | | | |
| Maintains unbroken eye contact | | | | | | |
| Makes direct eye contact often | | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | | |
| TALKING | | | | | | |
| Starts conversations | | | | | | |
| Makes personal comments about him/herself | | | | | | |
| Makes personal comments about me | | | | | | |
| Mentions family members (s)he knows to me | | | | | | |
| Curses/uses slang | | | | | | |
| Speaks loudly | | | | | | |
| Speaks softly | | | | | | |
| Is very formal (e.g. addresses me as Mr. or Ms.) | | | | | | |
| Is informal | | | | | | |
| Asks lots of questions | | | | | | |
| Waits for me to speak | | | | | | |
| Sits thru long pauses | | | | | | |
| Tells me what to expect of conversation | | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | | |

# IN THE CITY

## Purpose:

- To place adults in a situation in which they are required to rely on a youth staff member for direction.
- To place youth in a situation in which they are required to take responsibility for an adult.
- To provide youth and adult staff with a shared experience of cooperation.
- To build trust between adult and youth staff.

## Sequence:

This exercise, a derivative of the classic Trustwalk, is designed to provide adults and youth with an *experience* which requires adults to respect their youth partner's judgment and provides youth with an opportunity to take responsibility for an adult.* As a follow-up to Your Climate Setting Behavior/Interacting With an Adult, it is a good change of pace, moving the group actively beyond just talking about the issue of how people manifest attitudes of respect and disrespect. This exercise can also be used as an active, high energy way to start the Respect Building Unit.

## Suggested Time:

An afternoon after school or on the weekend.

## Materials/Space Needs:

Transportation arrangements. See "Variations on the Exercise" for other materials needs.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

1. On the day before this exercise is to be conducted, or as long before it as possible, tell youth participants that they will each be asked to guide an adult staff member around some part of the city that is their "home turf". In planning for this excursion, ask youth to think about:

   a. exactly where they each would like to take their partner and what they'd like the adult to learn about the city as they experience it; (this trip should be conducted in the vicinity of the training site and should be able

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* It is also designed as a prelude to Section III of this manual, "Developing Youth's Relationship to the Community: Creating Opportunities for Social Action."

to be accomplished in two hours);

b. the logistics of the excursion; e.g. how to get there and back, what materials to bring, etc.;

c. the complications they might experience.

2. Before beginning the tour, ask each adult staff member to select at random a youth to be his or her partner for the afternoon. (Adults should be given little or no information about the excursion *before* selecting their partner.)

3. Once teams have been formed, instruct each youth to give his or her partner an overview of the afternoon.

4. Before the group splits up, tell them to set a time for reconvening at the training site to process their experiences. Instruct people to be *very* careful about returning on time.

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5. When the group has reconvened, guide them in discussing their field trips, touching on the following topics:

a. What actually happened on these excursions? (Share "battle stories" of what each team saw, did and felt as they toured the city together.) What did the adults learn about the city seeing it through their partners' eyes?

b. How did each partner react to working together in this way? What were the adults' impressions of their youth guide--of their planning ability, their savvy about their community, etc.? the youths' impressions of the experience of being responsible for an adult? How did each partner feel throughout the experience? What did individuals find themselves *thinking about?* Did they catch themselves deliberately altering their behaviors at certain points in order to reflect better their new role of leader or follower?

c. Overall, what did the group discover about youth's capacity to lead? Adults' capacity to follow?

d. What insights did people gain into the lives of youth in the city? What does this suggest about the kinds of activities that your agency might want to engage in in the community in fostering youth empowerment?

## Variations on the Exercise:

If time and logistics do not allow, this exercise could be conducted as a Trustwalk. Have adults and youth pair up as before; then ask the youth member of the team to blindfold his or her partner. Allow each team 15 minutes to go on a walk together around the training site, with the youth being responsible for the adult's safety. Process the exercise by exploring

with the adults their reactions to being dependent on youth in this way, with the youth their reactions to being in such a position of responsibility. Guide the group to articulate whatever feelings of respect or trust emerge from the exercise.

Trainer Notes:

You may find your role in this exercise to be a demanding one in that you may need to be available to youth participants to help them plan their excursions. Indeed, you may choose to conduct the planning component of the field trip as a group exercise in which you work with youth to help them identify appropriately revealing activities in which to involve their adult partners. You will also need to be firm with the group about sticking to time commitments. In processing the exercise, try to get everyone to "come clean" about their initial reservations about the experience, and about the revelations that they had about themselves, their partners, and their community as they toured around together.

## ASSESSING YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES AS A PARTNER

**Purpose:**

- To provide adult and youth staff with a concrete base on which to build feelings of mutual respect.
- To provide adult and youth staff with a realistic assessment of each other's limitations.
- To initiate with staff the process of identifying strategies for utilizing each individual's strengths and for compensating for each individual's weaknesses in the organization.

**Sequence:**

Respect between adults and youth results, at least in part, from each having a clear knowledge of the other's real capabilities, coupled with each having a sense of personal control in the face of the other's weaknesses. In other words, for adults to enter into a viable partnership with youth they must both recognize and allow youth to express their competencies; at the same time, adults must have support to exercise their legitimate authority in the face of adolescent inconsistency or inexperience. Similarly, youth must build confidence about their own competencies even as they are encouraged to overcome the myth of adult omnipotence. In the previous exercise, adults were asked to take the plunge and trust in their youth partners' insights and abilities. This exercise builds on this experiential approach to respect-building by guiding adult and youth staff to develop a detailed picture of their strengths and weaknesses as partners in the organization. As such, this activity can also be used as an introductory exercise for Section II of the manual, "Developing Your Organization: Equalizing Power Within the Agency."

**Suggested Time:**

35 minutes (optional 60 minutes).

**Materials/Space Needed:**

Newsprint. Paper to write on. Writing implements.

**Facilitating the Exercise:**

1. Ask adults and youth to pair off and sit together in a diad.
2. Instruct each adult to talk to his or her partner for five minutes about his or her *strengths* by answering the following questions, which should be listed on newsprint for all to see in the front of the room:

1. *The things I do well are...*

2. *I am very good at making...*

3. *The things I like most about myself are...*

4. *Other people like me because I am...*

5. *Other strengths I have are...*

In asking people to reflect on their strengths in this way, be sure to instruct them NOT TO EDIT their responses. Tell them that you are not looking for socially acceptable answers or for things other people would agree with or accept. Tell them instead to name their strengths as *they* experience them. The respondent's youth partner should take notes as they talk.

3. Ask the teams to switch roles, with the youth listing his or her capabilities while the adult takes notes.

4. For the next five minutes the adult partner should try to describe his or her *weaknesses* by answering the following questions, which should again be listed on newsprint:

   1. *The things I need help doing are...*

   2. *Some things I'd rather avoid are...*

   3. *People tend to criticize me because I...*

   4. *The things I like least about myself are...*

   5. *Other weaknesses I have are...*

   The youth partner should again take notes, listing the adult's self-reported weaknesses on a separate sheet of paper.

5. Switch roles again, with the youth now reporting weaknesses and the adult taking notes.

6. Once both partners have had the opportunity to articulate their strengths and weaknesses, ask them to review their responses together by talking for 15 minutes about the implications of what they have articulated for their work in the agency. How, for example, do each individual's strengths manifest themselves in the agency in terms of the roles they play? The work they do? The other, less tangible things they contribute? Similarly, how do their weaknesses affect their input? Does the agency make good use of their strengths? Does it provide adequate support for dealing with or training for overcoming the weaknesses that affect an individual's functioning in the organization? Are there differences in the agency's ability or willingness to utilize adult--as opposed to youth--capabilities? In general, encourage each team to explore the question of how well the agency recognizes and programs for individual staff members'

strengths and needs for development.

7. (OPTIONAL) At this point, you may elect to continue the exercise by asking each pair to tape their lists to the wall, then circulate around the room reading each one's profiles. Give the group five minutes to circulate, then convene a large group brainstorming session to generate a list of the resources available in the large group. What strengths are represented throughout the organization? What competencies are absent from the group? How might the group better organize itself to take advantage of the abilities that do exist? To provide training that will minimize weaknesses?

8. Conclude the exercise by asking each person in the group to state something new that they learned about one of their co-workers--that is, to name an ability that someone has that they were unaware of.

Trainer Notes:

The aim of this exercise is to help adult and youth staff build respect for each other's competencies and to begin to develop a problem-solving orientation that minimizes the negative effect of their weaknesses in their working relations. (A simple adaptation of the exercise will also allow it to be used as an intake interview with youth participants in your program.) By working in pairs, each partner will begin to develop a fuller picture of some other individual on the staff. By moving into the large group, the staff as a whole can begin to build the respect that comes from understanding the group's collective capabilities and to generate the energy that comes from planning programs based on these competencies. This exercise is a critical, interpersonal prelude, then, to the exercises in Section II, which explore further ways to build a developmentally balanced organization. As trainer, you should familiarize yourself with this section of the manual as background for facilitating this exercise.

Finally, you should plan to play a major role in helping each pair to complete their personal sharing of strengths and weaknesses. Do not allow partners to kibitz about each other's self-analysis. This is not the place for participants to argue about one another's level of self-awareness. Rather, the exercise should be viewed as a time to be open to what one's partner has to say about him or herself. The more difficult skill of learning to give constructive feedback is developed in Part III of this section.

# REACH FOR THE SKY

## Purpose:

- To provide adult and youth staff with an experience of working together as peers.
- To provide participants with an opportunity to explore the impact of pressure on the nature of their interactions.

## Sequence:

This final exercise in the Respect Building section of the guide requires participants to apply the insights that they have gained thus far in the Developing Individuals section of the manual to a goal-oriented, working situation. It is one thing for adults and youth to sit together and talk about their respective strengths and weaknesses as individuals and as co-workers. It is quite another to maintain egalitarian relationships while executing a task that requires real skill and creativity at the same time that there is pressure to produce results that meet certain standards of merit. As the concluding exercise of this section of the manual, Reach for the Sky presses people to put to the test their ability to maintain mutually respectful working relationships in a task situation.

(A completely alternative approach to the Respect Building unit would be to begin with this exercise and treat it as a "test" of adults' and youths' abilities to work mutually with one another. If used in this way, the exercise would serve to expose the gaps in people's on-the-job partnership behaviors, rather than synthesizing the lessons of this unit.)

## Suggested Time:

25 minutes.

## Materials/Space Needs:

Any varied, interesting collection of building materials, including: brightly colored clay, multi-colored construction paper, straws, tooth picks, and paper clips.

Tools for manipulating these building materials, including: scissors, glue/paste, stapler, and rulers.

A big box in which to store all materials and tools.

A watch with a second hand.

Table space for each work group.

Facilitating the Exercise:

1. Divide the group up into task forces of five to seven people. Make no attempt to balance the adult-youth ratio in the groups, except to insure that they are all mixed.

2. Inform the small groups that they each have seven minutes to build a structure using any of the materials from the large box that appeal to them. Tell them also that their structures are to be judged against one another's according to the criteria of height, stability, and asymmetry. Give them no further instruction.

3. Time the groups' work closely, at the same time that you carefully observe their work, calling time at exactly the promised seven minutes.

4. Review the structures and announce the "winner".

5. Allow the group the remaining 15 minutes to process the exercise.

   a. What actually *happened* in your small group?

   b. What *roles* emerged in your group. Who was the task leader? Who was the idea person? Did anyone emerge as the socio-emotional leader, balancing the conversation and equalizing other inputs as the technical expert, specializing in materials handling? What other specialized roles emerged in the group. Was anyone left out of the action? Did anyone withdraw?

   c. How do you explain the roles that emerged in your group? Were they based on age? Creativity? Expertise in working with the materials? Skills in small group interaction? The ability to dominate the task group? To manipulate it? In general, try to understand *why* your group functioned as it did. It is especially important to explore here the ways in which the pressure of competition with the other groups affected your task force's way of functioning. When faced with a simulation of the kinds of pressures that often do exist in work situations, what traits emerged in the individuals in the group? What effect did this have on the group's overall dynamic?

   d. How would you evaluate your group's performance in terms of your collective ability to create an adult-youth partnership throughout the exercise? When faced with pressure to get something done, were you able to sustain a commitment to egalitarian relationships in your group? Did individuals consciously work to maximize their co-workers' contributions to the building process? Conversely, in an attempt to sustain partnership, was anyone forced to compromise his or her standards for the quality of the structure they wanted to see built? For the quality of the group's interaction? In general, how

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successful was the task group in integrating the lessons of the preceding exercises into its approach to this task?

e. If circumstances warrant, you might conclude the exercise by commenting on your observations of the groups. For example, what effect did the adult-youth ratio seem to have on the way the groups functioned? In general, what factors seemed to contribute to partnership? To hinder it?

Variations on the Exercise:

This exercise could be varied dramatically by deliberately altering the composition of the groups. You might insist, for example, that all groups consist of a majority of youth members or, conversely, a majority of adults. You might systematically vary their make-up, insuring that there was one, two, three, four and so forth adults in successive groups. You might even try including an all-youth and an all-adult group in the mix.

Trainer Notes:

Because participants will be caught up in the excitement and fun of building their structures, your role as an observer is crucial to the success of this exercise. Throughout the seven-minute building period, watch closely for any imbalances in the task groups related to individuals' inability to moderate their desire to get the job done quickly and well with a commitment to fostering co-equal participation throughout the group. The exuberant dominator, the "expert" who shuts out suggestions, the older and wiser group leader who rules on another's ideas about how to approach building the structure--these are just some of the problem behaviors to watch for. Conversely, the adult who sits back and "lets the kids do it" or the youth who retreats, doubting his or her own creativity, are failing in a more passive way to contribute to partnership. Your skill in facilitating the final discussion will depend to a great extent on your ability to see and diagnose such breakdowns of mutuality in the task groups. You might, therefore, want to designate a separate observer for each group to help with your task. If you do so, however, provide them with a check-list of things to watch for.

Section I.

PART I-C. FOSTERING TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION: ENGAGING IN SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE.

Broken Squares.

Giving and Receiving Feedback.

Structuring Opportunities for Giving Feedback Into Your Agency.

Yes I Can.

# BROKEN SQUARES*

## Purpose:

- To provide staff with a shared experience of both constructive and destructive styles of giving feedback.
- To assist the group in identifying the circumstances under which adults should intervene in youth activities.
- To assist the group in identifying those circumstances under which youth should refuse such interference.
- To foster group discussion of appropriate strategies for adults to adopt in guiding youth.
- To foster group discussion of appropriate behaviors for youth to adopt in interrupting adultism.

## Sequence:

If there is anything about which everyone associated with organizations dedicated to youth empowerment agrees, it is that "good" communication between adult and youth participants is a key to developing empowering interpersonal relationships. Only when the members of an organization are able to communicate clearly and directly with each other will everyone have the information that they need to grow and change toward being and acting empowered. Only when adult and youth staff are able to share their ideas and feelings effectively, and be guaranteed of being listened to and understood by their co-workers, will an empowering partnership emerge. Yet few other skills are so difficult to develop--and to apply consistently to our interactions with other people--as "good" communication.

Since communication is the skill practitioners consider most central to fostering true partnership between the adults and youth of an agency, you may elect to conduct the exercises of the Fostering Two-Way Communication unit at the very beginning of your training program. Certainly the ability to communicate well is assumed in all the exercises of this manual. On the other hand, the issues of learning to control how one exercises one's personal power and of developing feelings of mutual respect between adults and youth--which were explored in Parts A and B of this section--clearly underlie each staff member's ability or willingness to communicate well. Hence these exercises have been placed at the end of Section I of the manual as a way of synthesizing the partnership-building work that has been done in the preceeding activities. This first exercise in the communication series is designed to highlight a number of critical communication issues that invariably surface in adult-youth partnerships.

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* Adapted from Bavelas, Alex, Communication Patterns in Task Oriented Groups. No longer in print.

Suggested Time:

35 minutes (OPTIONAL: 65 minutes).

Materials/Space Needs:

One set of broken squares for every task group of five youth (see Trainer Instructions for Making a Set of Broken Squares).

One set of instructions and writing paper for each adult observer.

Table space for each group spaced far enough apart so that the groups cannot observe each other's activities.

Newsprint and writing implements for the trainer.

Facilitating the Exercise:

1. Divide the youth staff into groups of five and ask them to take their place at a table. (A minimum of three groups is optimal for the exercise. However, it can also be done by asking fewer groups to repeat the exercise utilizing a different set of observer/facilitator instructions in the repetition. If there are more than three task groups, duplicate instructions can be handed out to the extra groups.)

2. Choose an adult observer/facilitator for each group and give each facilitator a set of instructions. (See observer/facilitator instruction sheets.) Tell the facilitator to read his or her instructions carefully, then distribute the broken squares packet--one to each youth member of the group--and take over leading the exercise. (If there are insufficient youth groups to allow every adult to serve as an observer/facilitator, ask the remaining adults to serve as general observers of the exercise. The same is true of youth who are not placed in a task group.)

3. The observer/facilitator is now responsible for overseeing the remainder of the Broken Squares activity in his or her small group. Each one is to facilitate his or her task group in the manner described on his or her own instruction sheet.

4. While the observer/facilitator is leading the exercise, you should circulate throughout the group, making sure that each task group is following their set of instructions, and generally observing the groups.

5. When all the task groups have completed their work, reconvene the large group and lead a discussion of the experience around the following issues:

   a. How did the youth in each task group react to the way in which the adult facilitator was giving feedback on their efforts?

b. How did the adult observer/facilitator feel as he or she was intervening in the group's work?

c. Overall, what were the different styles of facilitation? When would each be appropriate and effective? What are the problems with each style?

d. By extrapolating from this experience, what adult-youth communication issues can you identify as being of importance in your organization? Probe the responses to guide the group in discussing the following issue areas:

1. When is it important for adults to hold back from giving feedback on youth efforts? Under what circumstances would letting youth make their own mistakes be best? At what point does such non-interference become a failure of supervision?

2. Under what circumstances should adults be directive with youth? What justifies direct adult intervention in youth affairs? At what point does guidance become condescension?

e. IF TIME ALLOWS. (30 MINUTES) When the group has finished brainstorming the communication issues that exist in their agency, ask them to break again, this time into an adult group and a youth group. Instruct the youth group to brainstorm the things they could say and do effectively to interrupt unnecessary adult interference in their activities. A note taker should record all suggestions. Conversely, instruct the adult group to brainstorm the things they could say and do to intervene constructively in youth affairs. Again someone should take notes. Reconvene the large group and ask each team to report in briefly on their discussion. Finally, instruct the group to decide upon a plan for reviewing the lists and for adopting generally acceptable suggestions as agency practice.

## Variations on the Exercise:

Any activity that is complex enough to require some real thought and cooperation on the part of youth task group members could be substituted for the Broken Squares exercise. Indeed, if your youth staff is small, you might wish to substitute an activity that utilizes smaller task groups. The critical thing to preserve in this exercise is the different styles of adult facilitation, which are crucial to making the discussion points about appropriate and inappropriate adult interventions in youth affairs. You might even consider subjecting the Reach for the Sky exercise in the previous section to this type of an analysis if everyone's behaviors in that exercise illustrate the same points.

Trainer Notes:

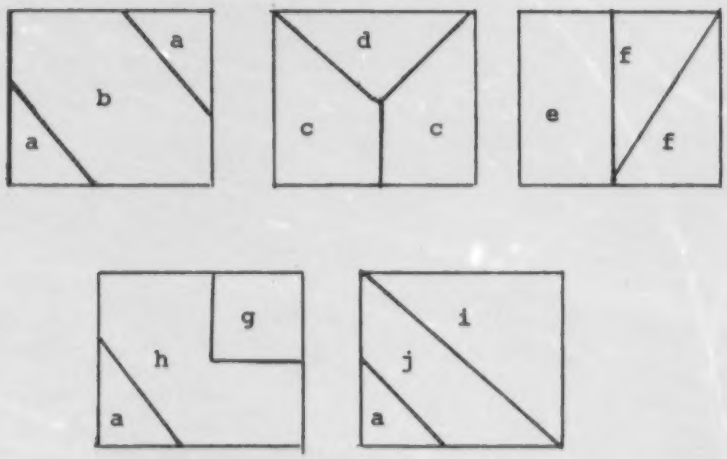
The critical piece of this exercise will be in helping the group to generalize from the Broken Square experience to the issues facing them in their own agency. Be prepared to probe participants along the following lines: Has anything like this ever happened to you in your work in the organization--e.g. you've been left to flounder when you wanted help? You've been forced to tell youth what to do and have never been able to convince yourself that this was appropriate? Can you describe, based on this exercise, the style(s) of interaction that you experience as unhelpful or unsupportive? The style of facilitation that you are able to listen to and learn from?

Be prepared also for some strong reactions from task group members: participants who are being ordered around may become genuinely angry; adult facilitators who are acting out of character may be unhappy about their actions. Allow as much time for ventilating feelings as is necessary. Finally you should consider carefully which adult should be assigned to which role. This exercise presents an opportunity for adults to test their leadership style.

TRAINER INSTRUCTIONS FOR MAKING A SET OF BROKEN SQUARES

A set consists of five envelopes containing pieces of cardboard which have been cut into different patterns and which, when properly arranged, will form five squares of equal size. One set should be provided for each group of five persons.

To prepare a set, cut out five cardboard squares of equal size, approximately six-by-six inches. Place the squares in a row and mark them as below, penciling the letters 'a,' 'b,' 'c,' etc. lightly, so that they can later be erased.




The lines should be so drawn that, when cut out, all pieces of 'a' will be exactly the same size, all pieces marked 'c' of the same size, etc. By using multiples of three inches, several combinations will be possible that will enable participants to form two squares, but only one combination is possible that will form five squares six-by-six inches.

After drawing the lines on the six-by-six inch squares and marking them with lower case letters, cut each square as marked into smaller pieces to make the parts of the puzzle.

Mark the five envelopes A, B, C, D, and E. Distribute the board pieces in the five envelopes as follows:

Envelope A has pieces i, h, e

B " " a, a, a, c

C " " a, j

D " " d, f

E has pieces g, b, f, c

Erase the penciled letter from each piece and write, instead, the appropriate envelope letter. This will make it easy to return the pieces to the proper envelope for subsequent use when a group has completed the task.

"Broken Squares" Activity

## INSTRUCTIONS TO THE OVERBEARING FACILITATOR

You are to play the role of the "adult who knows best." This is, for you, an exercise in getting a job done your way without reference to participants' feelings or needs for guidance. Everything you say to your task group, from giving instructions to facilitating their work, should be done in a condescending or directive manner. You should aggressively point out people's mistakes, do their thinking for them, and intervene every time you see them hesitate.

Begin by transmitting the following information to the group in an overbearing manner, telling people *what* to do, but not *why*.

> "In this packet there are five envelopes, each of which contains pieces of cardboard for forming squares. When I give the signal to begin, the task of your group is to form five squares of equal size. The task will not be completed until each individual has before him or her a perfect square of the same size as that held by others. You may speak to each other *as* you work, but you *may not* ask anyone directly for a card or in any way signal that another person is to give you a card. You may *give* cards to other people, but you cannot take them unless they are offered. Also, you may not simply throw your pieces into the center. Rather you must give pieces directly to another person. You may even give away all your pieces, even if you have already formed a square."

Having given these directions, do not allow questions and make no effort to clarify the instructions for participants. Instead, observe their work closely, intervening when people violate the rules, criticizing individuals when they make mistakes, suggesting to individuals what to do, goading the group to make progress, and arguing with the group about their approach. As you act out this overbearing role, try to observe people's verbal and non-verbal reactions and make brief notes to yourself about how individuals and the group are functioning.

"Broken Squares" Activity

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE UNINTERESTED FACILITATOR

You are to play the role of the "adult who is uninterested in the role of a facilitator." This is, for you, an exercise in letting people do their own thing. Everything you say to your task group, from giving instructions to facilitating their work should be done in a tentative, vague, or disorganized fashion. You should intervene randomly or inconsistently in people's work, making suggestions then reversing yourself, supporting contradictory approaches to the task, and generally exhibiting lack of clarity about the goals and objectives of the exercise.

Begin by transmitting the following information to the group in an imprecise fashion, blurring the purposes of the exercise and the behavioral instructions to the group:

> "In this packet there are five envelopes, each of which contains pieces of cardboard for forming squares. When I give the signal to begin, the task of your group is to form five squares of equal size. The task will not be completed until each individual has before him or her a perfect square of the same size as that held by others. You may speak to each other *as* you work, but you *may not* ask anyone directly for a card or in any way signal that another person is to give you a card. You may *give* cards to other people, but you cannot take them unless they are offered. Also, you may not simply throw your pieces into the center. Rather, you must give pieces directly to another person. You may even give away all your pieces, even if you have already formed a square."

Having given some version of these directions, allow questions but be as unhelpful as possible in giving answers. When you have succeeded in discouraging the group from seeking further clarification, gradually withdraw from the discussion and let them initiate the task. As they work, sporadically interject your feedback on their efforts, helping one person, criticizing another, and generally behaving in a random manner. As you act out this role, try to observe people's verbal and non-verbal reactions and make brief notes to yourself about how individuals and the group are functioning.

## INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CONSCIENTIOUS FACILITATOR

You are to play the role of the adult who is committed to helping the group as a whole to do the best job possible without sacrificing individual initiative and creativity. This is for you an exercise in cooperation, team building, and fostering individual growth. Everything you say to your task force, from giving instructions to facilitating their work, should be done in a supportive but challenging manner. You should articulate clearly your expectations that the group approach its task cooperatively and complete its work efficiently. In guiding individual task force members to function in this way, however, you should encourage them to improve their performance without being negative or authoritarian. You are to be consistent in your commitment to helping task force members to help each other to contribute their best.

Begin by transmitting the following information to the group in a facilitative manner, explaining everything carefully, detailing your expectations and standards of accomplishment, and encouraging questions and dialogue about the exercise:

> "In this packet there are five envelopes, each of which contains pieces of cardboard for forming squares. When I give the signal to begin, the task of your group is to form five squares of equal size. The task will not be completed until each individual has before him or her a perfect square of the same size as that held by others. You may speak to each other *as* you work, but you *may not* ask anyone directly for a card or in any way signal that another person is to give you a card. You may *give* cards to other people, but you cannot take them unless they are offered. Also, you may not simply throw your pieces into the center. Rather you must give pieces directly to another person. You may even give away all your pieces, even if you have already formed a square."

When participants are absolutely clear about how to proceed, and why, ask them to attempt to complete the exercise. Assure them that you will help them to complete their assignment successfully, then maintain active involvement with the group throughout the exercise. Answer all questions, carefully observe participants and take the initiative to support them through their feelings of frustration or confusion, make suggestions as people indicate their need for information or willingness to listen. As you act out this facilitative role, try to observe people's verbal and non-verbal reactions and make brief notes to yourself about how individuals and the group are functioning.

# GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

## Purpose:

- To assist staff in reaching a consensus as to what constitutes a supportive communication style.
- To provide staff with an opportunity to share their positive and negative perceptions of each other as co-workers in the organization.
- To provide staff with the opportunity to gain insight into how they affect each other.

## Sequence:

This activity is designed to build constructively on the things that the group learned about poor communication styles through the Broken Squares exercise. It is an exercise that also could stand alone, however, and could be introduced to the group at any time during this training. Indeed you might elect to do a great deal more general communications training (e.g. active listening, giving "I messages", etc.) as a prelude to the empowerment training process. See the Bibliography for a list of relevant references. The works of Thomas Gordon are especially recommended.

## Suggested Time:

40 minutes.

## Materials/Space Needs:

Newsprint or handout sheets as described.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

1. Write out on newsprint or distribute on handout sheets the following "Definition of Effective Feedback" and "Guidelines for Giving Feedback." Review them together, eliciting examples from the group:

> *DEFINITION: Feedback is a way of communicating with another person that gives information about what he or she is doing and how that affects other people. To be effective, feedback must:*
>
> *1. be able to be heard by the person you're giving it to.*
>
> *2. not harm the relationship between the giver and receiver of feedback.*
>
> *3. be a positive experience that leads to chances to give feedback again.*

*GUIDELINES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK*

1. *Do not "dump" your bad feelings on someone; say things so that they're helpful to the person your're talking to:*

   *WHAT NOT TO DO: I always get a headache when you slam the door like that.*

   *WHAT TO DO: I don't know if you realize you're doing it, but you just slammed the door and I can't concentrate when that happens.*

2. *Tell the person what he or she is doing: do not evaluate him or her as a person:*

   *WHAT NOT TO DO: You stupid slob!*

   *WHAT TO DO: You've left your unwashed coffee cup on my desk 17 times this week.*

3. *Give clear, specific examples. Do not be vague or general:*

   *WHAT NOT TO DO: You're OK.*

   *WHAT TO DO: I like the way you're able to talk to a young person without ever sounding condescending.*

4. *Time your feedback carefully. Don't give it too soon, before the person is ready to hear it, or too late, after it's become irrelevant:*

   *WHAT NOT TO DO: Stop crying and tell me what's bothering you.*

   *WHAT TO DO: I'd like to talk with you about it when you're ready to.*

5. *Give feedback in appropriate doses. Don't give more than a person can handle all at once.*

   *WHAT NOT TO DO: If you expect the adults around here to ever respect you, you're going to have to cut your hair, get a decent suit of clothes, stop slouching around, speak in complete sentences, and stop cursing.*

   *WHAT TO DO: Hey, Erik, I can't hear you when you talk. Could you try to speak up?*

6. *Give feedback about things a person can realistically change:*

   *WHAT NOT TO DO: Your fat bugs me and it's going to kill you.*

   *WHAT TO DO: Want to go for a run?*

7. *Speak simply and clearly. Don't dazzle the receiver with complex verbiage:*

*WHAT NOT TO DO:* *Clearly your problem is one of existential malaise that strips your id of oomph.*

*WHAT TO DO:* *You seem to be tired a lot lately, Gloria. Is there anything special happening?*

*8. Tell the person you're talking to how he or she affects you. Don't accuse him or her of doing bad things:*

*WHAT NOT TO DO:* *Why are you always sniffing?*

*WHAT TO DO:* *I really get distracted when you sniff like that. Can I get you a tissue?*

*9. Give feedback directly and honestly:*

*WHAT NOT TO DO:* *I don't mind.*

*WHAT TO DO:* *I'm really anxious about doing that. I don't think I speak very well in public.*

*10. Give feedback that can be checked with others for accuracy and appropriateness:*

*WHAT NOT TO DO:* *(Spout off the first thing that comes into your mind or onto your tongue.)*

*WHAT TO DO:* *(Check out your opinion with others to find out if your feedback is appropriate and useful.)*

2. Review the guidelines with the group, letting them clarify the guidelines and generate examples of their own. Do not hesitate to let the group amend the guidelines as their experience dictates.

3. Next ask the group to break up into mixed adult-youth teams of four people (2 and 2). These could also be--with simple modifications to the questions--all adult or all youth teams, depending on which dimension of intragroup communication the staff feels it would most benefit from working on.

4. Ask the teams to practice giving direct feedback to each other around the following issues *(which may be listed on newsprint or on handout sheets):

| ADULTS ASK YOUTH | YOUTH ASK ADULTS |
|---|---|
| Do I help youth to express their ideas? | . . . adults . . . ? |
| Do I listen carefully to what youth are saying? | . . . adults . . . ? |
| Do I communicate my ideas well? | . . . . . ? |
| Am I overly stubborn about my opinions? | . . . . . ? |
| Do I provide appropriate leadership for youth? | Do I seek opportunities to exercise leadership in the agency? |



* Adapted from Johnson & Johnson, Joining Together, p. 303.

| *ADULTS ASK YOUTH (cont.)* | *YOUTH ASK ADULTS (cont.)* |
|---|---|
| *Am I overly aggressive?* | *. . . . . ?* |
| *Am I sensitive to others' feelings?* | *. . . . . ?* |
| | *Do I take responsibility readily?* |
| | *Do I participate enough?* |
| | *Am I more disruptive than constructive?* |
| *Do I tell youth clearly and constructively what's on my mind?* | *Am I too quiet?* |
| *Do I appear to believe youth?* | *. . . adults . . . ?* |
| *Am I tolerant of youths' viewpoints even if I don't agree?* | *. . . adults . . . ?* |
| *Do I dominate interactions with youth?* | |

Instruct the teams to try consciously to apply the principles of giving effective feedback to this conversation. Also advise them to abide by the following rules and procedures:

1. *Use the questions provided or devise your own if you have others you'd like to discuss.*

2. *Anyone can decline to answer any question.*

3. *Each participant can direct any question to an appropriate respondent, but should ask specific people to respond to specific questions. The members of the group should take turns asking questions and should be sure that everyone has the chance to ask and answer once.*

4. *When someone is answering a question everyone else should listen carefully and be prepared to give feedback on the accuracy of what is said.*

5. *Don't expect everyone to have an answer to every question he or she is asked.*

6. *If you are not sure of how someone is feeling or thinking, ask him or her directly, by name, to respond.*

7. *Answer all questions put to you specifically. Illustrate your points with examples. Be direct and candid. Don't make up an answer if you don't have one.*

8. *If time allows, you may poll the group quickly at the end for their reactions to the exercise.*

Variations on the Exercise;

Most training manuals have scads of information on what constitutes good communication and how to give feedback. Try any other approach that looks relevant to you. The important thing is to help your co-workers learn how to support and challenge each other by committing themselves to giving feedback carefully and consistently.

Trainer Notes:

As trainer, your primary function throughout the exercise will be to monitor people's behavior as they practice giving and receiving feedback. Know what to look for before you begin and prepare yourself to give lots of feedback!

## STRUCTURING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK INTO YOUR PROGRAM

### Purpose:

- To encourage staff to translate the experiences of the preceding exercises into concrete plans for action within the agency.

### Sequence:

This action planning exercise should be done immediately after the Giving and Receiving Feedback exercise, preferably in the same time block.

### Suggested Time:

20 minutes.

### Materials/Space Needs:

Newsprint.

Writing implements.

### Facilitating the Exercise:

Divide the group into a youth team and an adult team.

Ask each team quickly to brainstorm the following questions, writing their responses on newsprint, and listing the name(s) of the person(s) who is requesting each item of feedback next to each response.

1. *As an adult staff member, I would like to receive regular, direct feedback from youth participants in the organization on the way I/my . . .*

2. *I would like to receive regular, direct feedback from my adult peers in the agency on the way I/my . . .*

3. *I would like to be able to give youth participants feedback about the following aspects of my interactions with them. .*

4. *I would like to be able to give my adult co-workers feedback about the following aspects of my interactions with them . . .*

5. *In order for these communications to take place, I would propose that we . . .*

Explain to them, before they begin working, that Questions 1 - 4 should be answered by citing the *specific* behaviors or areas of job responsibility that each person would like to be able to give or receive feedback in. In making this explanation, give an example of a response that will be useful to the group (e.g. the way in which I chair the Monday morning staff meeting)

as opposed to one which is too vague to be understandable (e.g. the way in which I talk). Similarly, explain to the groups that they should answer Question 5 by generating ideas for *when, where* and *how* feedback should pass between members of the organization. Remind them that they may need to brainstorm several different structures to allow for the range of feedback proposed (e.g. individual conferences, weekly all-staff criticism/self-criticism sessions, etc.). Again, instruct them to be *specific* in making proposals.

Convene the full group and ask each team to report in briefly. (The results of each team's responses to Questions 1 - 4 should be copied and circulated to participants after the training session.) Instruct the group to study silently each team's proposals for incorporating the giving and receiving of feedback into the program's regular routine. Then call for a suggestion as to what steps to take--or reaffirm--in the agency. Through discussion, try to conclude the exercise with an agreed-upon procedure for giving feedback within the organization.

Trainer Notes:

As the facilitator of this exercise, you should be certain that each team is brainstorming answers to the five questions, not debating them. It may also be necessary for you to assist people in giving specific answers. Do not hesitate to intervene in the group's process by asking for amplification or clarification of the items listed. Finally, in leading the final discussion, involve everyone in reaching a consensus about what the agency's action plan should be for incorporating a feedback mechanism into the program's structure.

# YES I CAN

## Purpose:

- To integrate the concepts of power sharing, respect building, and giving and receiving feedback into an activity of relevance to the agency's daily operations.

## Sequence:

This exercise is designed to help the full staff synthesize the lessons of the entire Developing Individuals: Fostering Adult-Youth Partnership section. It should be conducted as a summary experience.

## Suggested Time:

60 minutes.

## Materials/Space Needs:

Sufficient space for a full group "fish bowl."

Materials for keeping notes of the interaction.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

Instruct adult participants to caucus briefly and generate a program planning assignment for youth participants that relates to what are traditionally adults' leadership and decision-making responsibilities within the agency. For example, the assignment might be to "generate a proposal for how to absorb our program's recent budget cuts" or to "plan a short training program on empowerment for our Board of Directors."

Ask adults briefly to orient the youth team to the assignment giving them the *information* that they need to understand the task.

Arrange the group into a "fish bowl," the youth sitting together in a circle with adult staff stationed around the outside as observers.

Tell the youth that they have 20 minutes to organize the task and brainstorm approaches to it. Assure them that the purpose of the exercise is to give them an opportunity to apply their skills to working on an important aspect of the agency's operation and to receive feedback on their work, *not* to implement a perfect solution to the proposed task. Simultaneously, tell the adults carefully to observe the youth team in action and to be prepared to comment at the end of the session on the nature of the youths' interaction, the roles that emerged in the group, the effectiveness of their approach to the task, and the viability of their proposals.

After 20 minutes, instruct the youth to summarize their ideas and present them to their observers.

Conduct a feedback session in which adults consciously apply the rules for giving and receiving feedback to reporting their observations to the youth. In leading this session, encourage youth to give feedback to each other as well.

Conclude the session by soliciting people's final reflections on the issues of power sharing, respect and two-way communication raised in the unit.

Variations on the Exercise:

This "fish bowl" approach could be applied to any daily activity of the organization. Rather than manufacturing an agency-related task to observe and analyze, the group may choose to apply this approach to a normally scheduled activity. It is important, however, that the activity in question involve youth in making important decisions that have significant impact on the agency.

Trainer Notes:

In facilitating this exercise, you must be acutely aware of the issues attendant to the Developing Individuals: Fostering Adult-Youth Partnership unit. Review all earlier materials as preparation for the exercise. The value of the "fish bowl" relies largely on your ability to tie the concepts of the unit together in this final discussion.

## Section II. Developing Your Organization: Equalizing Power Within The Agency.

*"Young people are able to participate effectively in impacting institutions and systems that influence their lives."*

(Adapted from the preamble to the "Guiding Principles of the Youth Network Council," 1979 Annual Report.)

GENERAL NOTES TO THE TRAINER.

Section I of this manual is based on the idea that empowerment *begins* with building *interpersonal relationships* between adults and youth that are characterized by genuine power-sharing which is based in turn on the feelings of mutual respect that grow out of effective two-way communication. In order for your organization truly to empower youth, however, it is critical that the staff develop its *organizational relationships* with young people to the point where qualified youth are actively involved in decision-making and policy-planning roles within the agency. This second section of the manual is designed, therefore, to transform the roles and relationships that exist for and among adults and youth within the organization by helping staff to:

1. Explore the power relations that are currently institutionalized within the agency.

2. Develop new agency roles that foster youth's development toward individual responsibility-taking.

3. Practice this art of power-sharing.

In order to accomplish this purpose in an organizational setting, the exercises of this section are grouped into the following thematic areas:

A. Assessing Power Relations Within Your Agency.

B. Developing Agency Roles for Youth.

C. Initiating Youth Into Decision-Making Roles in the Agency.

At the completion of this unit, the staff of your organization will have designed a sequence of youth participation activities which systematically increase youth's power as change agents within the organization.

Section II.

## PART II-A. ASSESSING POWER RELATIONS WITHIN YOUR AGENCY.

Diagramming Your Organization

The Ball Game.

Who Decides?

Defining the Role of Adult Staff in Empowering Organizations.

# DIAGRAMMING YOUR ORGANIZATION

## Purpose:

- To provide staff with a graphic picture of distribution of power and responsibility within the agency.
- To promote the sharing of staff perceptions about the organization's decision-making structure.

## Sequence:

This activity is designed to focus participants' attention squarely on the issue of power relations within the organization. It introduces the Developing Your Organization section by guiding staff to develop a shared perception of how the agency functions.

## Suggested Time:

40 minutes.

## Materials/Space Needs:

Lots of crayons of many different colors.

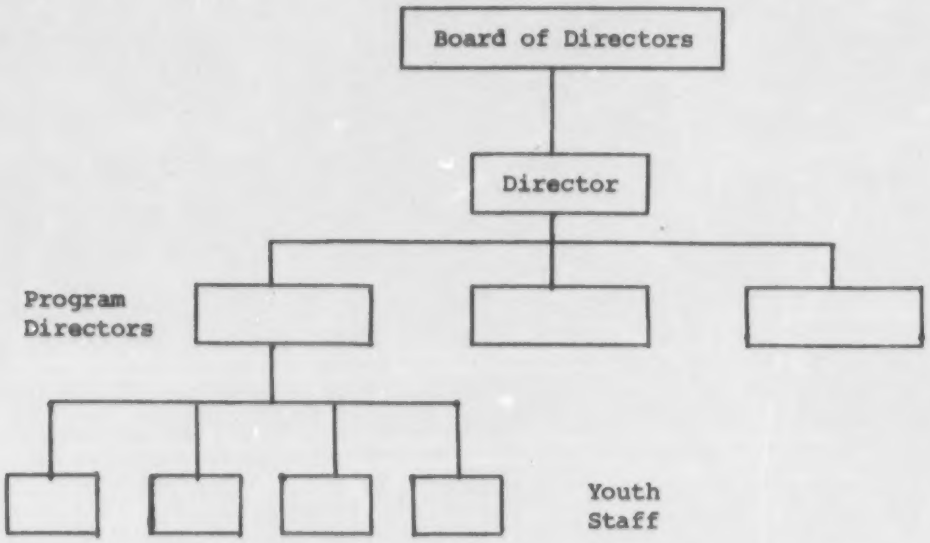
Newsprint.

Masking Tape.

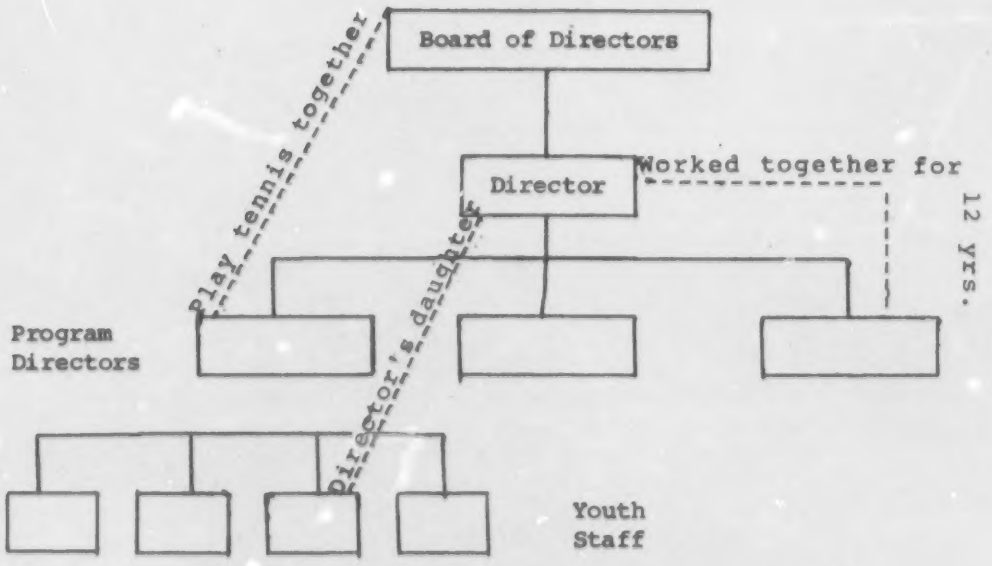
## Facilitating the Exercise:

Introduce the exercise by telling participants that you are going to ask them to draw a picture of how they think people within the organization actually relate to each other. Before they attempt to do this, however, help them to understand the assignment by sharing with them the following examples:

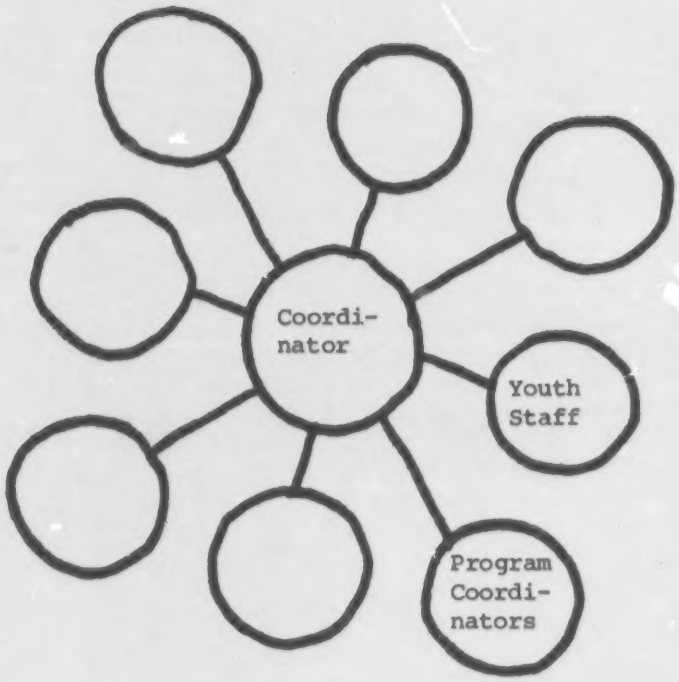
a. *The Formal Hierarchy.* Some agencies operate by organizing their people into rather rigid hierarchies. In such organizations, the amount of power and influence you have over what and how work is done by the agency increases the closer you are to the top of the heap.



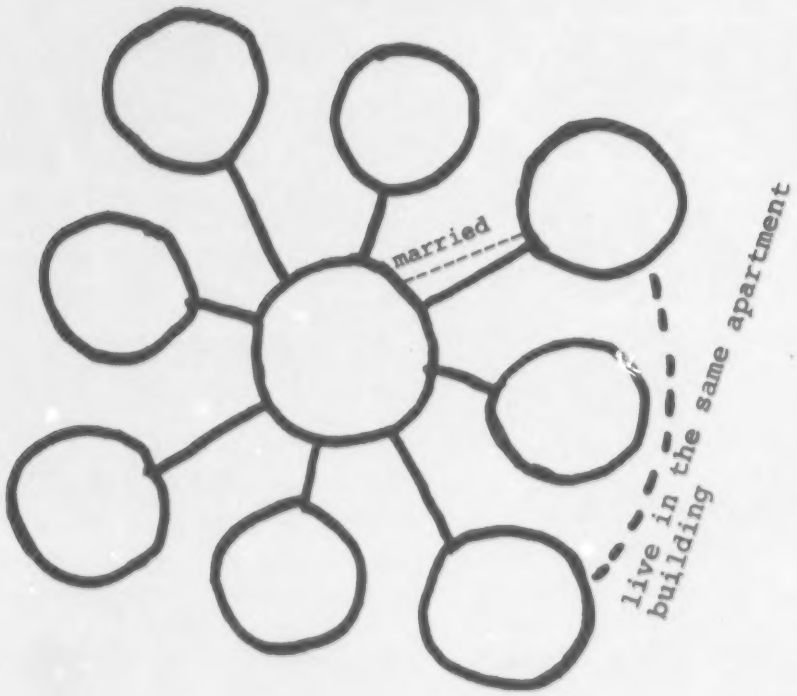

b. *The Informal Influence Structure.* Often in such hierarchical organizations, your ability to influence decisions is increased if you have a close, personal tie with someone higher up in the agency. Even though you aren't *officially* very powerful, you do in fact have a bigger impact on how things are done than your position would indicate.



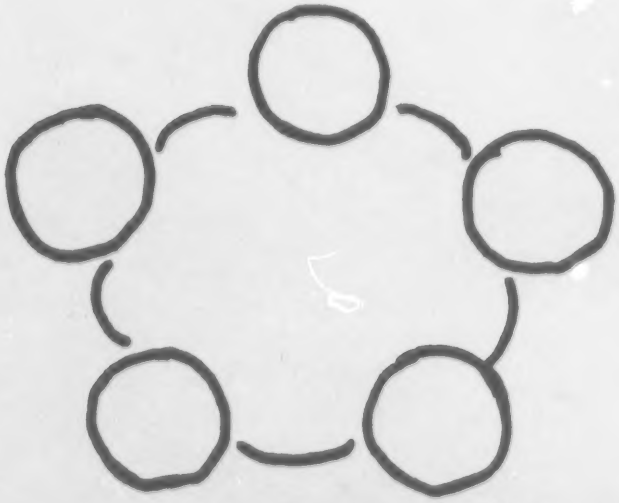
c. *Participatory Organization.* Many agencies, especially in the human services, have tried to develop organizational structures that allow everyone to have an equal say about how the agency is run. While such agencies have a clearly designated leader who is ultimately responsible for the program, everyone is expected to share in making the decisions that affect their life in the organization.




The realities of who has power in this kind of agency can also be affected by informal influence considerations:




d. *Consensus Organization*. Then there is the rare agency that has no officially designated leader but tries instead to function as a collective of co-equal peers. In such organizations, no one has more power than anyone else; rather, each person's influence is based upon the degree to which he or she possesses expertise about or insight into the work to be done.



Continue this brief "lecturette" with the following instructions:

*The purpose of this exercise, then, is for each person to draw a picture of how you think your agency is organized. Such a picture will reveal much about your agency's commitment to acting as an empowering organization. Your diagram may look like one of the organizations cited in the examples, or it may be completely your own design. Try using different colors, or differently shaped and sized symbols for each person in your diagram, to show the nature and types of relationships that exist. Remember that your picture should show clearly the way in which you think power is distributed in the organization. Be sure to show every individual in the agency on your chart, including youth participants in agency programs who have no staff function in the organization.*

After 10 - 15 minutes, ask everyone to sign their diagrams and tape them up on the walls of the room. Instruct the group to circulate, looking at everyone else's pictures.

After a few minutes, convene a full group discussion of the diagrams. Does anyone need clarification of any of the charts that they saw? Was anyone surprised by any particular diagram? By the way they were personally represented in any of the diagrams? Can the group agree on the one diagram that best represents the actual decision-making structure of the organization? Is this reality synonomous with the structure that people would *ideally* like to see exist in the agency? Where do youth fit in the real structure? What are the implications of this structure for the agency's ability to foster youth empowerment? In general, guide the group in a discussion of the things that the agency's structure reveals about its commitment to functioning as an empowering agency.

Variations on the Exercise:

This exercise could be processed in any one of several ways. For example, adult and youth staff could talk separately about their perceptions of the agency's structure, then come together to try to develop a better understanding of each other's experience of the agency. Or staff could process their drawings in pairs composed of individuals whose charts were significantly different. The task for such pairs would be to try to understand each other's perceptions and the reasons that each partner experiences the agency's decision-making structure so differently. Adopt whatever processing approach you feel will most help the group to explore the ways in which their organization's structure contributes to or undermines youth empowerment.

Trainer Notes:

There are many different issues related to organizational structure that may surface--or that you may wish to surface--in the course of this exercise. First there are the personal issues, that is, people's feelings about their position--or other person's perceptions of their position--within the organization. You may encounter anger or frustration, for example, on the part of youths who discover through this exercise that they do not wield much influence in the organization. Or you may find that a significant number of people misperceive some one person's place or influence in the organization. Or you may find that individual's motives for participating in the organization lead them to need different kinds of structures. Such situations, should they arise, can be used to guide people to discover the relationship between organizational structure and the empowering process.

On the other hand, there are a number of larger, intraorganizational issues related to empowerment that this exercise could serve to highlight.

Among them are:

1. The *effectiveness/usefulness* of a particular structure for organizing people to get tasks done and to be effective in the community.

2. The *appropriateness* of the agency's structure given the skills, needs and values of individual participants.

3. The *adaptability* of the organization's structure, that is, its ability to change quickly in response to pressures from inside or outside the agency.

4. The existence of persistent *myths or ideologies* in the minds of agency participants that confuse their thinking about how to view or make constructive use of organizational structure:

    a. the myth of equality, i.e., we're all capable of doing the same good job on all tasks and have an equal interest in doing everything.

    b. the myth of structurelessness, i.e., structure is bad and only has to do with power issues, as opposed to issues of efficiency and effectiveness.

Central to all these issues is the question of *why* an agency has structured itself as it has and *how* different structures serve to promote or hinder youth empowerment. Be prepared to help people explore such complexities and to counter the myth that no or collective structures are the way to foster empowerment.

# THE BALL GAME*

## Purpose:

- To reveal precisely who asserts leadership and controls communication within the agency.

## Sequence:

This exercise is a more active variant of Diagramming Your Organization and can be used to highlight some of the same issues of how power and influence are distributed within your agency. At the same time, however, The Ball Game does not have the depth of the other exercise in that it fails to provide participants with as comprehensive an overview of the agency's total organization. Use this activity to demonstrate to people how the "theory" of the diagramming exercise translates into practice in the day-today interactions of people at work within the agency.

## Suggested Time:

A decision-making discussion during a full staff meeting.

## Materials/Space Needs:

A large ball of string.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

Announce at the beginning of the meeting that you would like to take some time during this staff meeting to explore how communication flows within the group. Explain to everyone that, at some point during the meeting--when a substantive issue is being discussed--you will hand a ball of string to whoever is speaking. That person is to hold the ball until someone else takes the floor, at which time the original speaker is to hold on to the end of the string and pass the ball on to the new speaker. This passing of the ball should continue throughout the discussion, with each speaker holding the end as the ball is passed on. Participants may signal that they want the ball verbally or non-verbally at any time during the conversation, but the ball is only to pass on when a new speaker clearly controls the discussion. When a number of people all start talking at once, the string should pass only to the speaker who predominates. Everyone should try to participate as normally as possible when the exercise begins.

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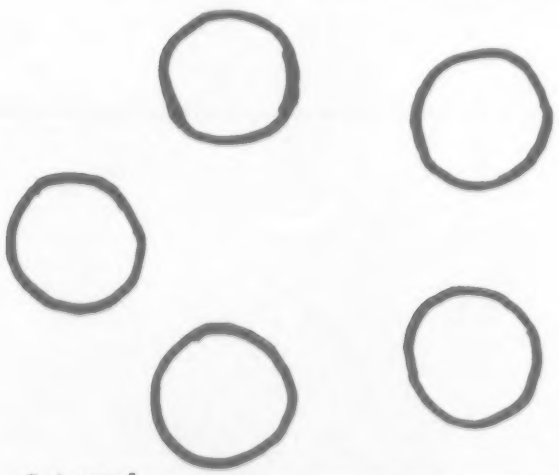
* Adapted from the *Iowa Leadership Handbook*, Iowa 4-H. Available from the Iowa State 4-H Office, 31 Curtiss Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA. 50010

At the end of the discussion, help the group to analyze the communication pattern that the web of string reveals. Who talks the most? The least? Who talks to whom? How do you interpret the pattern that is revealed? What does it tell you about the nature of adult-youth interactions in the group? On a more personal level, how did people feel when they were holding the ball? When they wanted the ball but couldn't get it? Did anyone feel systematically excluded from the discussion? Self-consciously dominated during the discussion? In general, what insights do participants now have into the dynamics between adults and youth in task-oriented discussions in the agency?

## Variations on the Exercise:

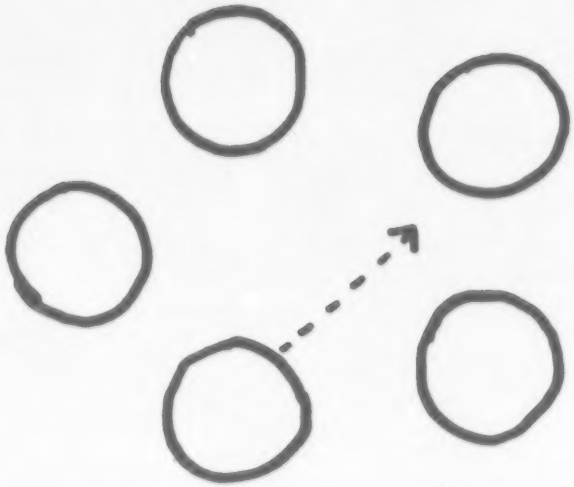
This exercise is a derivative of the more traditional frequency charting done by observers of small group dynamics. You could elect to undertake this activity as an observation exercise, unobtrusively noting the direction and frequency of communication within the group, then reporting the results to people at the end of the meeting and soliciting their reactions to your observations. This approach would have the advantage of not making participants as self-conscious as they might be in the Ball Game and thus may yield more accurate results. On the other hand, it's a lot less fun for everyone. If you elect to use the observational approach, you could record your notes in the following type of chart:



(Each participant in the discussion should be represented as a circle. Label each circle with the names. Chart should exactly diagram the arrangement of the group.)

Interval----------(Use one sheet per five-minute interval.)

CODE Sender to receiver



Sender to entire group.

Tally of messages sent.

Tally of interruptions or overrides.

Tally of encouragements to others to participate.

Another approach to this exercise would be to structure a brief discussion outside of a normal staff meeting. This approach would allow similar data to be gathered about the the group but would be less authentic in revealing who leads and dominates in actual, decision-making discussion. The advantage of this method is that it would allow you to observe the separate patterns of youth and adult teams, then chart the impact of adults and youth on each other when combined into a single task group. Such information could be invaluable in understanding power and control issues within your agency.

Trainer Notes:

As in the Diagramming Your Organization exercise, there are many subtleties of the agency's adult-youth dynamic that could be explored through such an activity. It is especially important that, as trainer, you remain conscious of the fact that *frequency* of communication is not necessarily synonomous with *control* of the conversation. Participants should also be encouraged to look at the appropriateness of participants' remarks, the accuracy of speakers' information, and so on, in determining the degree of influence individuals have in the group and the reasons for that influence.

As facilitator of this exercise, be prepared to observe the group very closely in attempting to understand the non-verbal as well as verbal sources of individual authority.

# WHO DECIDES?

## Purpose:

- To explore the degree to which youth are allowed to set the agenda of your organization.
- To examine the degree to which your agency's program has evolved out of youths' priorities and interests.

## Sequence:

An important characteristic of empowering organizations is that they build opportunities for youth involvement in the agency around the needs and interests of youth participants. It is thus important, in assessing your organization's ability to function as an empowering agency, to consider how much real influence youth participants have over agency decisions that shape the extent of their participation and the form that it takes.

## Suggested Time:

30 minutes.

## Materials/Space Needs:

Newsprint.

Sufficient copies of the "Who Decides?" checklist.

Writing implements.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

Before you facilitate this exercise, prepare an enlarged copy of the checklist on newsprint for your own use as trainer.

To begin the exercise, hand out copies of the checklist to everyone and ask people to take five minutes to complete it individually. Point out to them that there is space for them to add their own items and encourage them to do so.

Tabulate the results by asking for a show of hands on each item and recording the number of respondents in each category on your enlarged checklist.

Process the results with people by discussing the following questions:

a. What decision-making patterns in the agency emerge? Over what specific aspects of the organization do youth exercise control? Do adults? Do "outsiders"?

b. How do you interpret these patterns? Do they reveal anything about the agency's commitment to empowerment?

c. What would you like to see changed about all this? Are there decisions that youth should have more input into? That appropriately belong to adult staff or other involved persons?

d. What do you think are the most crucial areas of decision-making that youth *should* exercise considerable influence over?

Variations on the Exercise:

Like many of the exercises in this manual, the Who Decides? checklist could be used separately by adult staff and youth participants to help each group focus its own thoughts before interacting with each other about the issues at hand. As with other exercises processed in this way, it could be very revealing to see how people's perceptions shift once they bring their ideas to a large group discussion. Do youth allow their insight to be unduly swayed by adult perceptions? Do adults back off from expressing their honest convictions in a conversation with youth? The consistent practice of effective, two-way communication is a skill that should be continually monitored and reinforced.

Trainer Notes:

As with the other exercises in this part of the manual, it is important that you keep the group from leaping to simplistic analyses of power and control issues as they affect your organization. In discussing the decision-making patterns that emerge from the completed checklist, be sure to examine the "whys" of the situation very carefully with the group. Remember that empowering agencies operate according to developmental principles, inviting youth to take on increased responsibility as they demonstrate they are able to handle it. Do not allow people to become rigid in their thinking about who should control what. In preparing yourself to facilitate this exercise, you might wish to read through Part II-B, Developing Agency Roles for Youth, of this section of the manual to familiarize yourself with the developmental aspects of the empowering process.

"Who Decides?" Checklist

For each item on the checklist (A - M), place a check in the column that best describes who has the most say about how that thing gets done. You may check more than one decision-maker for each item if you feel that their influence over the decision are nearly equal.

| | Board of Directors | Agency Director | Adult Staff | Youth Participants | Funders | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Who decides what projects the agency will become involved in? | | | | | | |
| B. Who decides what roles youth will play in these activities? | | | | | | |
| C. Who defines the way these projects will be carried out? | | | | | | |
| D. Who approves the decisions that need to be made in the course of conducting a program? | | | | | | |
| E. Who monitors the daily activities of youth participants? | | | | | | |
| F. Who decides that a young person should be removed from the activity he or she is involved with? | | | | | | |
| G. Who determines when the project has been done well? | | | | | | |
| H. Who benefits from an activity being done well? | | | | | | |
| I. Who owns the final product of the agency's programs? | | | | | | |
| J. Who structures youth input in staff meetings? | | | | | | |
| K. Who decides what roles youth will play in the administrative functions of the agency (e.g. funding & budgeting, hiring & firing, etc.)? | | | | | | |
| L. Who appoints people to the Board of Directors? | | | | | | |
| M. Other | | | | | | |

## DEFINING THE ROLE OF ADULT STAFF IN EMPOWERING ORGANIZATIONS

### Purpose:

- To increase adult staff's understanding of what is required of them if they are to act to empower youth.
- To provide adult staff with feedback from youth as to how well they act to empower youth.

### Sequence:

Needless to say,it is crucial that the adult staff of your agency be able to function in ways that are consistent with youth empowerment. The last step in assessing your organization is to take a close look at adult staff's professional qualifications to work as empowerers.

### Suggested Time:

60 minutes. (OPTIONAL: 90 minutes).

### Materials/Space Needs:

Newsprint.

Magic Markers.

Masking Tape.

### Facilitating the Exercise:

Drawing on the Introduction to this manual, review with the group the definition of youth empowerment and discuss the seven characteristics of empowering organizations. In presenting this material, explain that the group will soon be asked to apply these ideas to developing a job description for an adult staff member in an empowering agency.

Ask the group to divide into an adult and a youth subgroup.

Instruct the youth team as follows:

*You have been asked to interview a candidate for a full-time staff position in the agency. You want to be certain that the person selected is someone that youth will be comfortable working with at the same time that he or she is someone that youth will respect and learn from. In preparation for this interview, brainstorm a list of the specific qualities that you think the new staff person should have (e.g., able to listen carefully to youth, flexible enough to respond in just the right way to each person, etc.). OPTIONAL: Then develop a list of 10 interview questions that you feel would*

*best assess whether or not the applicant is the right person for the job. For each question that you develop, be prepared to explain why you are asking it and what you think it will tell you about your interviewee.*

Instruct the adult team as follows:

*Quickly brainstorm a list of the actual job responsibilities of a "typical" adult staff member in your agency (e.g. meet weekly with youth participants to reivew their work, file regular reports, help youth define their work responsibilities, etc.), and discuss the amount of time staff members actually spend working at each activity. Then brainstorm a list of the specific qualifications that you think a person must have to do this job (e.g., able to work flexible hours, basic writing skills, understanding of the process of goal setting, etc.). Finally, review this job description in the light of the definition and characteristics of an empowering organization discussed earlier. Is it clear how the work that adult staff do in the agency contributes to youth empowerment? Do the requirements of the job clearly guide and support adult staff to interact with youth in empowering ways? Are the qualities that are necessary to do the job the same as those personal characteristics that would make it possible for an adult to work as a true partner to youth? Is adult staff's time directed toward empowering activites or is a disproportionate amount of time and energy drained off by bureaucratic tasks? In general, what would you change about the definition of adult roles within the agency to make them more consistent with the empowering process?*

Reconvene the full group and ask the adult and youth teams to compare their lists of qualifications for adult staff. How consistent are these lists? Are there any major differences between adult and youth ideas about what qualifies an adult for this kind of work? Why do such differences exist? Can the group resolve their lists into one set of qualifications for a youth empowerment position? Conclude the exercise by asking people to report in *one at a time by responding to the following sentence completions:*

ADULT--This exercise made me realize _____
about my job/how I do my job.

YOUTH--This exercise made me realize _____
about the work that adults do in this agency.

OPTIONAL: 30 minutes.

If time or group skill allows, ask adults and youth to pair off into mock interview teams. Instruct each youth to interview their adult partner for a position with the agency using the questions generated earlier by the youth team.

After 15 minutes of interviewing, instruct the adult partner to reflect to his or her teammate on what these questions made him or her think about his or her own qualifications for work in the agency. It would also be appropriate, although perhaps more difficult, to ask the youth partner to give feedback to the interviewee on his or her responses to the questions.

Variations on the Exercise:

This exercise may be more meaningful for the adults in your agency if they work alone, rather than in a full adult team, on spelling out their job descriptions, then reflecting privately on how well qualified they feel to work in an empowering role. In processing the exercise you might also prefer to conclude by helping the group to brainstorm a list of the skills adult staff feel they would like to try to develop or improve and a list of suggestions for how to structure training in these areas.

Trainer Notes:

This exercise is potentially quite threatening to all participants since it asks adults to reflect on their competencies as empowering agents and youth to corroborate or question adults' self-perceptions. The exercise should thus be carefully introduced as *a tool for enhancing people's ideas about their work and/or for identifying new areas for staff training and development*.

Be prepared also to discuss the ways in which the agency's structure (see Diagramming Your Organization) affects staff's ability to function as empowering agents. Indeed the group may wish to discuss ways that the organization's structure needs to change in order better to support empowering roles for staff. Depending on the ability of youth participants actually to conduct their interviews, the final, interactive section of the exercise can be eliminated altogether without damaging the activity's usefulness. Be certain to review the rules for giving effective feedback in Section I of this manual before attempting to facilitate the optional section of the exercise.

Section II.

PART II-B. DEVELOPING AGENCY ROLES FOR YOUTH.

Creating Meaningful Role Descriptions.

Individualizing an Activity.

Overcoming Regression.

Sequencing Youth Involvement.

# CREATING MEANINGFUL ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

## Purpose:

- To identify the characteristics of roles that empower youth.
- To examine closely those roles that exist for youth within your agency for the relevance of these roles to the empowerment process.
- To provide youth with an opportunity to analyze how they feel about the role they have at present within the organization.

## Sequence:

Having assessed your agency's ability, from an organizational point of view (i.e. decision-making structure and processes, staff roles, power and influence networks), to function as an empowering agency, it is now time actually to develop empowering ways to involve youth in the agency and its programs. This first exercise is designed to help participants examine whether and how the roles that already exist for youth within the organization contribute to youth empowerment.

## Suggested Time:

60 minutes.

## Materials/Space Needs:

Sufficient copies of the Analyzing Agency Roles for Youth and Analyzing Your Role worksheets.

Newsprint.

Magic Markers.

Masking Tape.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

In the large group, brainstorm a list of all the roles that currently exist for youth within your agency. It is not necessary that these roles be filled by someone at this moment or that they be salaried or staff positions. Rather the list should include everything that is available for youth participants in the agency to become involved in. Be specific enough in your role titles that the distinct activities that youth engage in in the agency are clearly delineated (e.g. Receptionist, Dance Planner, Apprentice, Board Member, etc.). It is likely that youth will be involved in several such activities all at the same time or that roles will be activity-specific and thus very short-term positions. As trainer, you should write these roles on newsprint for the group.

Divide the group into an adult and a youth team. Explain to everyone that each team will be looking at youth's roles within the agency in terms of their meaningfulness for individual youth.

Instruct each member of the youth team to complete an Analyzing Your Role worksheet for the specific activity they are currently involved in in the organization. If an individual is involved in more than one role at this time, ask him or her to focus on any *one* activity that he or she is most interested in thinking about.

When everyone has completed his or her personal worksheet, ask the group to compare notes with each other and try to develop an overview of how satisfied youth are with their roles. Does the group, for example, feel that their roles capitalize on their strengths? That there are opportunities to grow in their jobs? That adequate training is provided?, etc. Instruct the group to develop a report for the adult staff on their feelings about their roles.

While the youth team is undertaking its analysis, each member of the adult team should be completing the Analyzing Agency Roles for Youth worksheet. Explain to the group that they will be generating an overview of the value--in empowering terms--of their agency's roles for youth participants. Give the group the option of working alone, then comparing notes, or of taking the analysis through in the large group. Instruct the group to develop a consensus as to how and how well they think the roles that exist for youth in their organization serve to empower youth.

When each group has completed its analysis, reconvene the full group and ask each team to report in briefly. Conclude by asking everyone to reflect on the following questions:

*What makes a particular experience empowering for an individual?*

*How is it that an activity can be empowering for one person and not for another?*

*How can the agency determine what activities will be meaningful for which youth? On what basis will youth be matched to roles? Can an activity cease to be empowering for someone? How and why? What responses should the agency make to a youth who begins to express dissatisfaction with his or her role?*

Variations on the Exercise:

In undertaking an exercise of this nature, it is critical not to become too wedded to the worksheets provided. Such materials are simply tools to foster discussion of appropriate topics.

In this case the worksheet highlights the characteristics of empowering roles for youth. If participants would rather talk out their ideas about the value of existing agency roles, there is no reason why they cannot approach the exercise in this way as long as they touch on the questions raised by the worksheets.

Another way of getting at the issues explored in this exercise would be to build on the Assessing Your Strengths and Weaknesses exercise of Section I of the manual to *design a role that is precisely tailored to the needs, interests, and skill levels of each youth participant*. In approaching the exercise in this way, adult and youth participants would be paired to work on developing a role description for the youth partner that exactly fits his or her interests and abilities. After each team had *written up its role description and listed* the *youth's specific qualifications for the position,* these descriptions could be shared and discussed throughout the large group. The exercise would conclude with the group's *planning how and when specifically to implement these roles*.

Trainer Notes:

This exercise is designed to help participants think about the characteristics of roles that empower youth and to assess whether the role options available to youth in their agency embody these characteristics. As with the organizational structure exercise in Part I--Assessing Power Relations Within Your Agency--of the manual, participants will tend to over-simplify their analysis of agency roles, labeling some roles as empowering or meaningful and others as meaningless. As trainer, you must repeatedly reinforce *the situational nature of the empowering process*. What is challenging for one youth at an early stage in his or her development toward responsibility-taking will be tedious and boring for the more experienced youth who has already mastered basic interpersonal and life skills. This point should be amply illustrated by individual youth's comments about their feelings about their own roles in the agency. Be sure to draw this information out in the large group. In discussing this exercise it is also important to encourage participants to think about *how to assess* when a youth is ready to move on to more sophisticated roles and to think in terms of a *specific progression of roles* that should be made available to youth participants in your organization.

In facilitating this exercise as it is designed here, you may find it tricky to facilitate the adult and youth groups simultaneously. Be sure to move back and forth between the groups as they need your assistance, and be prepared to help each group plan its reports for the large group discussion. Better yet, appoint a youth co-trainer to help you manage this activity or conduct the exercise in stages so that you can work with each group separately.

## ANALYZING AGENCY ROLES FOR YOUTH Worksheet

In the left-hand column of this worksheet are questions that will help you to assess whether the roles that exist in your agency are empowering for youth and under what circumstances. Select three agency roles that you feel are particularly central to the agency's work with youth and enter them in the spaces provided at the top of each column. (If each adult participant selects different roles you will, as a group, be able completely to analyze the value of your organization's youth participation activities.) Then complete the checklist for each role by jotting down brief notes in response to each question asked. Do not respond with "yes" or "no" to any of the questions. Rather, provide the details of answers to each question. When you have finished working, reflect on the implications of your answers.

| Characteristics of Roles that Empower Youth / Agency Roles | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Is this a real job? What is its usefulness to the organization? | | | |
| What kind of youth will really *want* to fill this role? Is this work that is of perceived interest/value to some youth? Does it derive from the realities of youths' perceptions & experiences? | | | |
| What knowledge, skills, & attitudes are necessary to succeed at this role? Can the job be adequately assessed to allow for a successful match with an interested youth? | | | |
| Is the role able to be flexibly defined to allow for modifications based on individual youth's skills & interests? Can youth question & redefine the role? | | | |
| Is adequate support & supervision available from the staff? Do staff know how to help make the match work? | | | |

| Characteristics of Roles that Empower Youth (cont.) / Agency Roles (cont.) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| What training is necessary to specifically prepare appropriate youth for this work? | | | |
| What satisfaction will youth get from doing this work? Is it clear what constitutes success in this role? | | | |
| How does this role lead to other more challenging roles when the youth has mastered the work? Are opportunities for mobility provided? | | | |

I feel I need more training in _____

_____

_____.

(LIST SPECIFIC THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT TO DO THIS WORK.)

I do/do not feel I can change this role to better fit my interests and abilities. If I could, I would change it by _____

_____

_____.

The satisfaction I get from doing this work is _____

_____

_____.

Overall I feel _____about this work.

The next role I'd like to try in the agency is _____

_____.

# INDIVIDUALIZING AN ACTIVITY

## Purpose:

- To help adult staff develop skills in tailoring an activity to the interests, needs and abilities of individual youth.

## Sequence:

As the Creating Meaningful Role Descriptions exercise made clear, a central characteristic of roles that empower youth is that they derive from and build on interests and experiences of individual youth. The next two brief exercises are designed to help adult staff develop strategies for individualizing their interactions with youth in ways that maximize youth's development toward empowerment.

## Suggested Time:

30 minutes.

## Materials/Space Needs:

Newsprint.

Magic Markers.

Masking Tape.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

Explain to the adult staff that they are going to work together to redesign one role to fit better the needs of three different youth.

Instruct them to begin by selecting the names of three youth that they have all had contact with and that they perceive as very different people. Tell them that the trio they select should be racially, sexually, socio-economically, and chronologically mixed, if possible.

Next ask the group to agree on a role that they would then try to tailor so that each young person could fill it successfully. Once the group has settled on the group and role it wants to work with, ask them to assess verbally each young person in terms of his or her:

- Educational/Knowledge Attainments.
- Skills.
- Interests.

## ANALYZING YOUR ROLE

This worksheet asks a few questions that will help you to assess how meaningful your role in the agency is for you. If you are currently involved in more than one role in the agency, analyze the one that is most interesting for you to look at right now. It may be a role that you are very excited about or it may be a role that is really boring or bothering you right now. Complete this worksheet by jotting down brief answers to each question. When you have finished working, think about what your answers tell you about how you feel about this role.

My role in the agency is _____.
(ACTIVITY OR JOB TITLE)

What I do is/is not important to the agency because _____

_____.

I am/am not interested in this role because _____

_____

_____.
(EXPLAIN WHY THIS JOB DOES OR DOESN'T EXCITE YOU.)

I am/am not able to do this job well because _____

_____

_____.
(LIST THE THINGS THAT YOU KNOW AND THE THINGS THAT YOU'RE ABLE TO DO THAT MAKE THIS A JOB YOU FEEL YOU'RE GOOD AT. IF THIS IS A ROLE YOU FEEL YOU'RE WEAK IN, TRY TO EXPLAIN WHY.)

I do/do not get enough help from staff to do my work well. They help me by _____

_____

_____

_____.
(DESCRIBE EXACTLY WHAT STAFF DOES THAT AFFECTS YOUR ABILITY TO DO YOUR WORK WELL.)

I wish they would do more of _____

_____

_____.
(DESCRIBE EXACTLY WHAT YOU NEED FROM STAFF IN THE WAY OF SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT.)

- Attitudes/Values.
- Motivation.
- Pertinent Personal or Family Background.
- Other.

As the group assesses each youth, make sure group members can justify the relevance of the traits that they list to the role in question. Require the group to eliminate from consideration any individual characteristics that are not pertinent to the job for which the youth is being assessed. One member should record the group's comments on newsprint, a separate sheet for each youth.

Having developed a clear picture of each youth's capabilities and needs for further growth, the adult staff should brainstorm the changes that would need to be made in the role in question if it is to be optimally suited to each individual. Tell them to consider altering such features of or expectations for the job as:

- Work Schedule.
- Quantity of Work Accomplished.
- Quality of Work Accomplished.
- Nature of Training.
- Responsibility for Others.
- Degree and Kind of Supervision.
- Formal Reporting Requirements.
- Other.

Conclude the exercise by asking each member of the group to summarize what he or she learned about how to tailor youth participation activities to promote optimal individual growth.

## Variations on the Exercise:

An important "reality check" for the adult staff--and a useful activity for further fostering adult-youth communication--would be to involve the youth in question in responding to the role description developed for him or her. Incorporating the results of this exercise into actual planning for youth participation in the agency is obviously to be hoped for.

# OVERCOMING REGRESSION

## Purpose:

- To help adult staff identify the behavioral symptoms of mismatching a youth to an activity. Youth who are given responsibilities that they are not yet ready to take on risk learning negative things about themselves that can subvert the empowering process.

## Sequence:

This exercise, like its predecessor, is aimed at sensitizing adult staff to the complexities of developing agency roles that truly empower youth.

## Suggested Time:

30 minutes.

## Materials/Space Needs:

Materials for jotting down notes.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

Instruct adult staff to think of a young person that they work with who is having trouble following through on his or her commitments to the agency: i.e. misses appointments, is chronically late, fails to complete tasks, etc.

Ask each person to describe *as precisely as possible* the unconstructive behaviors that the youth engages in. Then ask each adult to jot down his or her speculations as to why the youth is experiencing difficulty in his or her role. Finally instruct each person to think of ways to alter the youth participant's role or to adjust the expectations of him or her in that role so that it better suits the youth's capabilities.

Ask two or three selected adults to share their analyses with the full group. After each report, solicit the group's feedback on the case presented. Is the description of the youth's regressive behavior accurate? Are reasonable explanations for his or her difficulties offered? Are the suggestions for modifying the role feasible and appropriate?

In general, practice recognizing and troubleshooting disempowering mis-matches of youth to exeriences.

Finally ask the group to conclude this exercise by sharing ideas for how adult staff can best cope with such behavior without damaging either the agency or the young person's development. In the process, help the group to develop guidelines for:

- When and How To Be Directive.
- Structuring Youth's Time.
- Structuring Youth's Tasks.
- Saying No to Youth.

Variations on the Exercise:

Again, this is an activity whose results could be implemented in the agency.

Trainer Notes:

In facilitating this exercise, it is crucial that you keep people focused on working to understand the ways in which giving youth too much power and responsibility too soon can result in their backsliding into negative behaviors (e.g. expressions of frustration, regression, incompetence, etc.). Do not allow the exercise to focus on youth whose negativity is generalized and non-specific. Rather, guide the group to understand how mismatching specific youth with particular experiences can undermine youth's development toward empowerment.

# SEQUENCING YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

## Purpose:

- To define a range of roles for youth that promote youth involvement in increasingly complex levels of agency decision making.

## Sequence:

Maximizing individual youths' development is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for promoting youth empowerment. If youth are to learn to control the systems that affect their lives, they must have opportunities within the agency to learn to wield their power.

This exercise asks staff to design a sequence of youth involvement activities that is carefully structured to help youth grow into responsible, decision-making roles within the agency.

## Suggested Time:

45 minutes.

## Materials/Space Needs:

Sufficient copies of the "Sequencing Youth Involvement" worksheet.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

Review with participants the worksheet provided. Answer their questions about it; entertain their suggestions for changing it.

Ask all participants, adult and youth alike, to complete the worksheet provided. (This exercise can be conducted alternatively as a group brainstorming session or through conversations in adult-youth pairs or in small task groups.)

Ask everyone to pass their worksheets around the group. When people have had sufficient opportunity to think about each other's ideas, help people to discuss the following:

*What reservations do you have about such a developmental sequence of* youth involvement activities? How would you *amend the sequence suggested by the worksheet?*

*Do you agree with the types of responsibilities that the sequence is grooming youth for? Are you personally willing, for example, to have appropriate youth sit on your Board? Make funding decisions? Publicly represent the agency to the community?*

*What specific opportunities need to be added to the roles available to youth in your agency to complete your organization's empowering sequence?*

*At what levels do youth tend to get stuck in your organization?*

Help the group to summarize their understanding of the roles that must be given to youth *within* the agency if youth are to be adequately prepared to function as advocates and change agents in the larger community.

Trainer Notes:

Beware individuals' resistance to considering youth for certain, very responsible roles. Remind them that development is a key to empowerment and thus, theoretically, all youth can, with the proper blend of support and challenge, grow into decision-making roles.

INV)

SEQUENCING YOUTH INVOLVEMENT Worksheet

This worksheet outlines a structure for youth involvement in your agency that progressively moves youth toward actively controlling the systems that affect them. In completing the worksheet, you will identify what your agency is already doing to share power with its participants while assessing what changes need to be made in your total program to improve its empowering potential. Be as specific as you can in your answers.

| Sequencing Youth Involvement | Existing Agency Roles at this Level | Other Possible Activities in This Category | Qualities/Behaviors Youth Manifest When Ready for These Roles | Staff Support Needed to Function Successfully in These Roles | Training Needed To Function Successfully in These Roles |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **LEVEL I.** Youth as receivers of agency's services. | | | | | |
| **LEVEL II.** Youth volunteer to work in a program area in a subordinate role, carrying out other people's ideas for the job. | | | | | |
| **LEVEL III.** Youth work in a program area as staff with specific responsibility for making decisions about their work. | | | | | |
| **LEVEL IV.** Youth work in a program area in a supervisory capacity, with responsibility for facilitating other people's work. | | | | | |
| **LEVEL V.** Youth work as agency staff with responsibility for the general operations of the agency (e.g. program planning, funding & budgeting,etc.) & with particular responsibility for fostering youth participation in the agency. | | | | | |

SEQUENCING YOUTH INVOLVEMENT Worksheet (continued)

| Sequencing Youth Involvement | Existing Agency Roles at this Level | Other Possible Activities in This Category | Qualities/Behaviors Youth Manifest When Ready for These Roles | Staff Support Needed to Function Successfully in These Roles | Training Needed To Function Successfully in These Roles |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LEVEL VI.<br>Youth work in policy planning & decision making roles in the agency as, for example, members of the Board of Directors, with particular responsibility for promoting youth participation in the community. | | | | | |

Section II

PART II-C. INITIATING YOUTH INTO DECISION-MAKING ROLES IN THE AGENCY

Letting Go/Taking Charge: A Power and Leadership Role Play.

## LETTING GO/TAKING CHARGE: A POWER AND LEADERSHIP ROLE PLAY

### Purpose:

- To provide youth with an experience of negotiating for what they want.
- To provide adults with an experience of encouraging an opportunity for youth to exercise more influence in the organization.
- To provide youth with an opportunity to receive feedback from adults on their responsibility-taking behavior.
- To have adults present to youth information on how they would like to see youth act in decision-making roles.
- To provide information to youth on common ploys used by people with power to protect that power.

### Sequence:

This activity is intended as a summary exercise for this entire section of the manual. Providing *opportunities* for youth to exert influence in the agency is obviously only the first step to creating empowering roles for youth. If youth are actually to function in decision-making activities within the organization, they must also be given a chance to learn about and practice the art of negotiating with a powerful adult. Simultaneously, adult staff must learn to judge when a young person is ready to be pushed into exercising leadership and thus when to control their natural impulses to "do it for youth". The following exercise consists of two parallel role plays, one designed to give youth an opportunity to practice acting as the catalyst for change in the agency, the other designed to give adults an opportunity to practice supporting youth to take more responsibility for themselves in the organization.

### Suggested Time:

60 - 90 minutes (depending on approach taken)

### Materials/Space Needs:

Role Play instructions for participants.

Newsprint and Markers.

### Facilitating the Exercise:

(Optional) Review with the youth the rules for giving feedback introduced in Section I.

Present each team with the roles that are specifically relevant to them. Divide the group into adult and youth teams, then instruct the youth to select a youth for an observer role. Create triads (groups of three) out of the whole group. It is crucial that adults and youths not see each other's role assignments before attempting their role plays.

(There are variations for conducting this exercise. For example, the group can take the extra time to do both role plays so that everyone experiences the different roles. Or the trainer can assign people to roles based on his or her perceptions of which experience they most need to have. Select an approach based on your assessment of your groups' needs for practice.)

Allow the role plays to go on for 15 minutes. At the end of this time, ask the observers to share their perceptions with the pair they observed.

Next, instruct the role players to reflect on their experiences, suggesting that they touch upon the themes included on the suggestions for processing attachments.

Conclude by helping the group to generalize, based on this experience, about:

a. the times when people tell and act in their own agency as they do in the exercises.

b. the kinds of behaviors youth must exhibit before they will be entrusted with responsibility by adults.

c. the kinds of tricks adults with power will use to protect their power.

d. the conditions under which their own agency will accept youth into roles of power and influence. The blocks that exist in their own agency to this actually happening.

Trainer Notes:

The principal value of this exercise to youth lies in the opportunity it provides to practice dealing with adults who resist their readiness for real responsibility. Its value for adults is the opportunity it provides them to learn which of their behaviors undermine youth in their efforts to take control of their lives and thus how better to support youth to grow in this direction. In order to deepen participants' insights into these complex issues, you should be prepared to develop the following ideas with participants:

Things youth should think about in attempting to share power with adults:

- The adults' needs: What benefit would he or she get from fostering participation by youth? What risks does he or she take in power-sharing with youth?

- Your own competencies: Are you worthy of respect? Able to contribute concretely to the agency? Possessing real knowledge and skills that make you a resource for peers?

- Things you can do to help earn respect: Do you understand what you specifically can do to foster adult trust of your capabilities?

Things adults should think about in arranging to share power with youth:

- Public realities: What are the organizational or community conditions that work against youth empowerment?

- Personal ploys: How do I work to undermine youth either intentionally - by fearing to share power - or unintentionally - by being overly helpful or directive?

## ROLE PLAY #1: TAKING CHARGE

**Youth Advocate for Youth Participation:**

You believe that it is crucial that you participate in helping to make agency decisions that affect youth involvement in the agency. Your goal is to create new structures that will guarantee youth a say in the program planning process. One specific proposal you wish to make is that the make-up of the agency's Board of Directors be changed so that it is 55% youth. You may also wish to make other proposals aimed at ensuring greater participation in agency programs. In your interview, try to help the adult you are approaching with this proposal to understand your ideas. Make every attempt to demonstrate to him or her why youth are ready and able to take on such responsibility. Try to model responsibility-taking by youth yourself.

**Adult Skeptic:**

You are a member of the agency staff and a staff representative to the Board of Directors. You have a number of serious reservations about the concept of youth involvement in general and about your interviewer's proposals in particular. You intend to question this youth sharply on his or her ideas and are not inclined to commit yourself to supporting this proposal. Your prejudices show through as somewhat patronizing behavior. You try to appear supportive but your real intention is to browbeat this kid into dropping his or her proposal.

**Observer:**

Jot down as many observations as you can about the interaction that you're observing. Pay particular attention to how well the youth presents his or her arguments and how well he or she is able to deal with the Adult Skeptic. Note such behaviors as verbal or non-verbal signs that the youth is becoming intimidated, or evidence that the youth doesn't know how to handle the situation.

**Processing Questions for Adult Staff Role Play: Taking Charge**

1. What was the strongest argument presented by your partner? The weakest?

2. At what point in the conversation was your partner particularly successful at fielding a question or comment from the Adult Skeptic? To what aspects of the youth's arguments did you find yourself responding favorably?

3. What about the youth's argument or approach would you change to make its impact on the Adult Skeptic be more favorable?

4. How did you perceive the Youth Advocate in terms of his or her maturity, credibility, and ability to take responsibility? What specific behavior led you to respect or suspect this person's capabilities?

Processing Questions for Youth Participants Role Play: Taking Charge

1. How would you describe the adult's attitude toward you?

2. How did you find yourself responding to the adult's aggressive non-support of your ideas? Did you feel angry? Frustrated? Discouraged? Incompetent?

3. Can you identify what specifically was hard for you to deal with? Were you aware of particular times when you "lost your cool" and acted in ways you later regretted? Looking back, how would you change the approach that you took?

4. Which aspects of the interaction do you feel you handled best?

5. What changes in the adult's behavior would have made it easier for you?

6. What aspects of your proposal did you feel best able or prepared to defend?

7. What things were you uncomfortable with about the proposal? Were there questions you couldn't answer; issues you couldn't clearly defend?

8. Overall, how do you feel about your ability to negotiate successfully with adults for things you want?

## ROLE PLAY #2: LETTING GO

**Timid Youth:**

You have a marvelous idea for how to improve the program that you're involved with but you are unable to bring yourself to mention it to anyone. The very thought of questioning what is usually done and of suggesting that people consider doing it your way instead makes you feel faint. You don't know how to bring up your ideas or to present them to people who seem interested. Your inability to discuss this with anyone is making you feel dissatisfied and frustrated. You're beginning to think about quitting the program, yet when people approach you to try and talk it out, you withdraw and get irritable.

**Adult Facilitator of Youth Participation:**

You have noticed that the timid youth is beginning to complain a lot. Everything seems to annoy him or her. You have decided to help this person. You hope to draw him or her out, then help him or her figure out how to solve the problem.

**Observer:**

Jot down as many observations as you can about the interaction that you're observing. Pay particular attention to how well the adult succeeds in drawing the young person out while challenging him or her to take more responsibility for resolving his or her own dilemma. Note such behavior as giving effective feedback, recognizing the symptoms of youth's withdrawal, responding with support and encouragement, and guiding the youth to see how to act in the face of his or her discouragement.

**Processing Questions for Adult Staff Role Play #2: Letting Go**

1. How would you describe the youth's behavior in this situation? How did you interpret this?

2. How did you feel when faced with such behaviors? How would you characterize your response?

3. Were you aware of particular times when you regretted the way you responded to your youth partner? Did you find yourself needing to "help this youth" or "solve" his or her problem? Describe.

4. Were there particular aspects of the interaction that you feel you handled well? Were you able to help the youth to discover his or her own answers? Describe.

5. What feedback could you give the youth on this kind of behavior? How did you respond to it as an adult?

6. How well do you think you were able to help motivate the young person to begin expressing his or her ideas and dealing with his or her problems? What implications does this have for your work as one who empowers youth?

Processing Questions for Youth Participant's Role Play #2: Letting Go

1. Have you ever felt like the youth in this exercise in your work in the agency? Can you explain to your adult partner when you feel this way and what helps get you over feeling discouraged?

2. What was the most helpful thing that your partner did to help you deal with your frustration and withdrawal? The least helpful?

3. Are there specific responses that he or she made to you that really worked?

## Section III. Developing Youth's Relationship to the Community: Creating Opportunities for Social Action.

*"Together we have helped to keep young people involved in the life of our neighborhoods and our neighborhoods involved in the lives of our young people."*

David Weinberg, Director
Local Motion

### GENERAL NOTES TO THE TRAINER

Thus we arrive at the final stages of the empowering process: involving youth in meaningful roles in the community, roles that enable them to work to change the quality of their own and other people's lives. The training activities presented in this final section of the manual assume that participation by youth in the wider community occurs as the somewhat natural outcome of the empowering process that begins with youth involvement in increasingly complex roles in your agency. In other words, the skills and insights that are the outcome of Sections I and II of this manual, are prerequisites for those aimed for in Section III. The interpersonal and work skills developed through collaborating as partners with adults in meaningful agency roles are critical to youth's work in the larger community. "Developing Youth's Relationship to the Community: Creating Meaningful Opportunities for Action" thus means moving beyond the issues of personal skills building and individual and agency development to look at how to increase the organization's knowledge of where and in what ways to engage youth in their community.

SECTION III. DEVELOPING YOUTH'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMMUNITY: CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL ACTION.

Orienting Yourself to Your Community.

Finding the Issue.

Building a Strategy.

Countering Community Pressure on Effective Youth Groups: A Leadership-Building Exercise

# ORIENTING YOURSELF TO YOUR COMMUNITY

## Purpose:

- To increase participants' knowledge of and sensitivity to the community in which they live.
- To provide a background of information upon which to base discussions about community involvement.

## Sequence:

Participation in your community can be meaningless and insufficient without a thorough knowledge of what the realities of life in the community are. It is thus critical to prepare for active roles in the community by understanding it well. The activities outlined below are designed to help people synthesize what they already know about the community, to identify gaps in their knowledge, and plan ways of filling these gaps.

## Suggested Time:

An on-going activity which should be kept up-to-date by the group.

## Materials/Space Needs:

Activity-specific.

## Suggested Activities:

To be conducted by adult staff and youth participants together.

Secure a map of the city or of those particular neighborhoods that your program is involved with. Begin to record on the map, using colored pin markers, overlays, etc., geographically-related information that is useful to your program planning process. For example, you probably need to know:

a. The location of youth services programs in your locality or of your own program's projects;

b. The residential distribution of your participants: Are there clusters of participants who live together? What does this reveal?

c. The racial composition of your area: Are there predominantly Black sections, Hispanic sections? Other ethnic concentrations?

d. The socio-economic distribution of your population: Are there clearly identified neighborhoods? Exclusive areas?

e. The location of industries, small businesses, and other key economic institutions in your neighborhood: What does this distribution reveal about your community's economic base? What are the implications of this for youth programs?

f. The distribution of recreation or entertainment facilities in your locality: What does their presence or absence reveal?

g. The location of government, research or other public policy planning centers in your area: What does their presence or absence reveal?

h. Other special features of your neighborhood (i.e. abandoned buildings or beaches, large privately held land holdings, waterfront areas, etc.)

Develop as clear a picture as you can of what your community consists of. Practice the habit of noticing what's happening in your community and of always asking: What does this information tell me about life in this community? Why are things the way they are? What are the implications of this for youth involvement in this community?

Subscribe to local papers. Establish a way of passing articles of relevance to your neighborhood or the largest community around the agency. For example, put up a Current Events Bulletin Board that is used to keep agency participants up to date on local, state, and national events that affect youth in general or the agency in particular. Or set aside time in every staff meeting for discussing such events.

Establish a way to follow up on particularly relevant stories. In general, try to become aware of local events taking place in the neighborhood and city in which you live.

Develop a Speakers Program for participants in your agency. Decide what you need to know more about if you are to function effectively as change agents in your community, then invite people to come and share their information with you.

Possible topics might include:

- Who Runs City Hall
- How Decisions are Made About the City
- The Future of Funding for Youth Services
- Four Youth Talk About Their Lives in the City
- Chicago's Changing Economy: No Jobs for Youth
- Careers in Day Care
- Life on Canal Street: Neighborhood Residents Share Their Perceptions.

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Possible speakers might include:

- Local Politicians (the mayor, councilperson, etc.)
- Business leaders
- Professionals in any field of interest
- Neighborhood residents
- Youth workers from innovative programs
- Youth, particularly ones *not* involved in your agency's programs

Actively work to educate yourselves about the conditions of life in your community as other people experience and interpret them. Get in the habit of "interviewing" people in the areas served by your program. Try to find out from them what their lives are all about, what kind of services would enhance their lives, how they view youth and youth's ability to contribute to improving life in the community. Bring this kind of outside information into planning discussions in the agency.

Study the distribution of wealth and power in your area of the city by combining and analyzing all of the information gained through data gathering. Try to understand how decisions are made in the community and where the resources are. Think about the implications of this for youth involvement in local affairs. Try to imagine where and how youth could be effective participants in their communities. Summarize your questions in an article, a scrapbook, a mural, a play or some other expressive form.

## Variations on the Exercise:

Variations are endless. The challenge to the agency is to develop meaningful ways to provide participants with the information that they need to function as informed citizens in the community. Accurate knowledge is a cornerstone to empowerment.

It is especially recommended that you tailor such an information gathering effort to your work on a specific project or community problem. To try to learn everything all at once about every aspect of community life could be overwhelming and discouraging.

## Trainer Notes:

Activities of this nature will not take place unless they are in some way structured into the regular operation of the agency. Everyone will agree that it is crucial to have real knowledge of the community before rushing into community action/youth advocacy projects. Everyone is also very busy, and such "special" activities will tend to fall through the cracks. As trainer you may need to educate your colleagues to the critical importance of orientation and training to the empowering process. *Without a solid foundation of knowledge,*

*skills and positive attitudes, empowerment--which, at least in part, is simply a process of developing real competencies that can be applied to problem solving in the real world--can never occur.* In addition to pushing your agency to develop a "continuing education" program for its members, you should be ever-alert to identifying new needs for learning and new strategies for meeting these needs.

# FINDING THE ISSUE*

## Purpose:

- To synthesize participants' general knowledge of community issues into concrete statements of specific problems that lend themselves to youth involvement.

## Sequence:

Once youth know what these issues are for themselves and for their community, they must translate this knowledge into project ideas that are sensible and meaningful to carry out. Causal Chain Analysis is a simple technique for discovering which youth can best invest their energies in working for change.

## Suggested Time:

60 minutes.

## Materials/Space Needs:

Newsprint.

Magic Markers.

Masking Tape.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

Begin by presenting the group the Causal Chain Analysis technique described in the "Trainer Notes" for this exercise.

Ask the group then to brainstorm a list of issue areas that they have encountered in their lives and work in the community (e.g., there are no jobs for youth in our neighborhood; elderly people are afraid to leave their homes; etc.). Instruct the group to reach a consensus on an issue that they would like to analyze further with an eye toward using this analysis to develop youth involvement projects in the community. In other words, they should concentrate on studying an issue that they would really care to work on.

Instruct the group to divide into four-person mixed adult-youth teams. Each team should carry out a 20-minute Causal Chain Analysis of the topics selected.

Reconvene the large group and generate one causal tree that everyone is in agreement about.

Solicit people's reactions to the value of the Causal Chain

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* Adapted from the 1980-81 National Center for Service Learning's Basic High School Curriculum.

as a tool for analyzing community problems and for resolving these issues into smaller ones that lend themselves to action.

Proceed to the "Building a Strategy" exercise.

## Variations on the Exercise:

The Causal Chain is a non-technical way of drawing on people's knowledge of existing community conditions to identify specific areas of need that would lend themselves to youth involvement. A formal Needs Assessment will generate the same information in a more reliable, methodologically precise way.

## Trainer Notes:

The Causal Chain is a very straightforward way of identifying all the possible variables that contribute to creating and maintaining conditions of life in the community. When carefully done, this analysis will help agency participants identify the specific pieces of larger community issues that can be altered or improved through youth involvement. The technique is a simple one which involves systematically asking "why" a certain situation exists, and building a chain of the answers to this question. Here is an example:

OBSERVED PROBLEM: Youth are systematically excluded from opportunities to plan and evaluate programs designed to serve them.

WHY?

They *lack the knowledge and skills* needed to participate effectively in this process.

WHY?

They have *never been trained* in the competencies they need to participate effectively in this process.

WHY?

No one really knows what these competencies are.

WHY?

Adult decision makers have never thought about it.

ETC.

Eventually, at some point in the process, the analysis begins to generate new problem statements that quickly suggest actions that could be taken to remedy the original situation. In the example, for instance, the last statement given suggests that adults should begin to think about how to find out what the needed competencies are and how to plan training programs that would make it possible to prepare youth to act as program planners and evaluators. If the analysis were continued,

several project ideas--all of which represent a part of a solution-- could be generated at different levels of the chain. An entire multi-project plan of action could thus be discovered.

Returning for a moment to the original observed problem, careful reflection reveals that there are other directions in which the analysis could have gone:

OBSERVED PROBLEM: Youth are systematically excluded from opportunities to plan and evaluate programs designed to serve them.

WHY?

Adult planners fail to include them in the process.

WHY?

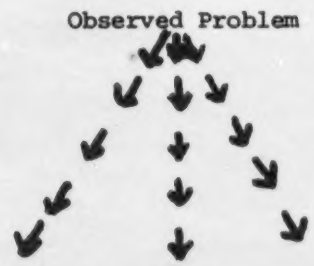
They believe youth incapable of such involvement.

WHY?

They persist in prejudices about youth.

ETC.

Obviously, any complex observed problem will give rise to several chains of thought that can be logically developed. By pursuing a thorough analysis of the observed problem, an entire causal tree will emerge:




Such a Causal Tree will suggest numerous youth involvement projects that could be meaningful responses to the observed problem.

In helping participants to apply Causal Chain Analysis to the issue under study, encourage teams to brainstorm as many branches of the chain as they can. Arguments over which chain to pursue are not helpful at this time. Rather, they should strive to ferret out as many possible project ideas as they can.

# BUILDING A STRATEGY

## Purpose:

- To devise a method for systematically translating project ideas into plans of action that can be implemented by youth in the community.

## Sequence:

Having used Causal Chain Analysis to identify things that youth might do to respond to critical issues in the community, it is important to identify the specific elements of a feasible strategy for actually implementing these ideas.

## Suggested Time:

60 minutes.

## Materials/Space Needs:

Newsprint.

Magic Markers.

Masking Tape.

## Facilitating the Exercise:

Begin by brainstorming project ideas that are suggested by the different levels of the Causal Tree generated in the Finding the Issue exercise. Select one for futher development. (This should be a project that the group is sincerely interested in doing.)

*EXAMPLE: Develop a training program for youth on program planning and program evaluation in order to foster their informed involvement in this process in the agency.*

Undertake the following assessment of the project idea in either the large group or in smaller task forces:

a. *What is the goal of this project, i.e., what do we want to see come out of this?*

*EXAMPLE: A three-session training program that can be used to certify youth for the program planning committee of the Board of Directors.*

b. *What resources exist that we can draw on to do this project?*

- *What PEOPLE might help us?*

- *What FINANCIAL RESOURCES do we have access to? Other MATERIAL RESOURCES?*
- *What KNOWLEDGE do we have that will contribute to the project?*
- *What SKILLS do we have that will contribute to the project?*
- *What ATTITUDES do we have that will contribute to the project?*
- *How can we best draw on these to do the project?*

c. *What forces are working against us in successfully carrying out this project?*

*What PEOPLE might hinder us?*

*What FINANCIAL/MATERIAL RESOURCES do we lack?*

*What KNOWLEDGE do we lack that we need to do the project?*

*What SKILLS do we lack in order to do the project?*

*What ATTITUDES do we lack to do the project?*

*What steps must we take to overcome or neutralize these problems?*

d. *Given our strengths and weaknesses going into this project, should we do it? If so, how? Describe clearly what steps should be taken and when.*

Having devised an action plan for this project, assign specific youth to work roles on the project and make plans for its implementation.

Trainer Notes:

This exercise should be integrated into the regular operations of the agency. It is simply a slightly more organized way of approaching a process everyone has done many times before. The point is simply to help people to become more conscious of how they devise and choose strategies for involving youth in community projects. Especially encourage people to utilize the knowledge they have gained from Orienting Yourself to Your Community.

# BUILDING A STRATEGY WORKSHEET

IDENTIFIED NEED/PROJECT IDEA _____

_____

GOAL OF THE PROJECT _____

_____

| RESOURCES | HINDRANCES |
|---|---|
| PEOPLE | PEOPLE |
| MATERIAL | MATERIAL |
| STAFF/SELF | STAFF/SELF |

## STEPS TO TAKE IN IMPLEMENTING THE PROJECT

| STEPS | BY WHOM | BY WHEN |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| 4. | | |
| 5. | | |
| 6. | | |

# COUNTERING COMMUNITY PRESSURE ON EFFECTIVE YOUTH GROUPS:

## A LEADERSHIP BUILDING EXERCISE.

**Purpose:**

- To prepare youth for the reality of community resistance to participation by youth.

**Sequence:**

In training youth to identify youth/community issues and to strategize about how to have an impact on them, it would be unfair not to train them to counter the negativity they might confront. This exercise, the concluding one of the manual, is a sophisticated simulation designed to teach youth about how power is exercised in the community.

**Suggested Time:**

1-1/2 or 3 hours, depending on the approach taken.

**Materials/Space Needs:**

Copies of The Scenarios; materials for brainstorming.

**Facilitating the Exercise:**

Divide the group into three teams of mixed adult-youth members. Designate one team as the Youth Escort Service Group, one team as the City Hall Group, and one team as the Senior Citizens Group.

Give copies of the Scenario: Round 1 to each group and ask them to study it for 15 minutes, carrying out the initial activities that are included in the scenario. Instruct them that once the simulation begins they are to *act in role* at all times.

After the groups have finished preparing, convene a meeting between the Senior Citizens and Youth Escort Groups. Explain to the groups that, by the end of the meeting, the Seniors must reach a decision either to refuse to cooperate with the Youth Escort Service idea or to get involved with the youth in developing it. Instruct the groups to try to hammer out a description of the service that is acceptable to everyone--how Youth Escorts are to be selected, how accountability is to be guaranteed, etc.--by the end of the meeting. Allow 20 minutes for the negotiation.

At the end of the 20-minute period, call the question: Seniors, will you endorse the Youth Escort Service? Why or why not? Youth, are the compromises reached acceptable to you? Why or why not?

Solicit feedback, first from the City Hall observers, then from all participants in the simulation, on the negotiation. Pay particular attention in the discussion to the following issues:

a. Do the youth participants fully *understand the nature of the resistance* they were encountering? Could they appreciate the seniors' point of view?

b. *Did they respond appropriately and effectively* to the roadblocks thrown up by the seniors to frustrate their efforts? How creative and flexible were they able to be in generating solutions to their standoff with the seniors?

c. Were the youth *able to compromise* with the seniors *without* completely *losing control* of their idea?

d. What generalizations could you make, based on this simulation, about the kinds of resistance youth actually face in their efforts to become actively involved in their community? What different forms is resistance to youth involvement likely to take? What strategies are effective ones for overcoming it?

OPTIONAL. If the Youth Escort Service Group succeeded in securing an endorsement from the Senior Citizens Group, you might opt to move on to Round 2 of the simulation. Hand out copies of Round 2 to each group and proceed as before, convening the negotiation meeting, processing the simulation, and extracting from the experience general knowledge on how power manifests itself in the community and how youth can work to overcome resistance to their empowerment.

## Variations on the Exercise:

Obviously no simulation fully captures the essence of a real power struggle. If there is an actual situation of resistance to participation by youth in the community currently affecting your agency--or if you have experienced this in the recent past--it is preferable to substitute an analysis of that actual situation for this simulation. If you make such a substitution be certain to examine in detail the source of the resistance to successful participation by youth, the motives and beliefs of the opposition, the ways that youth have contributed to the problem, and strategies for reducing resistance.

In terms of the simulation itself, you may wish to conduct Round 1 and Round 2 of the exercise in two separate sessions. There are also several alternate ways to form the task teams: By making all three groups of mixed adult-youth composition, youth participants can learn from the greater political experience of adults in working through the simulation. On the other hand, by making the Youth Escort Service Group an all-youth group and the others all-adult groups, you will enhance the realism of the simulation. Finally, by inviting senior citizens, Her Honor the Mayor, the Chief of Police, and members of City Council to take their own parts in the simulation, you will provide youth participants with a training experience they'll

never forget!

Trainer Notes:

Simulations are a unique approach to training that allow participants to make "real-life" decisions and to take "real-life" actions without having to suffer the consequences of "real-life" mistakes. This particular simulation is designed to help youth understand how power is exercised in the community, how problems look from the perspectives of other people, and how to act responsibly and effectively in retaining power of their own. It will only be a useful exercise if you take the time to process it carefully, helping participants to evaluate their actions and reactions, to understand the mistakes they've made, and to discuss ways to better deal with community resistance to youth participation in the future. If you do not have sufficient time fully to analyze the simulation, and to help youth understand its implications for their actual involvement in the community--two hours of discussion for every one hour of play--it is better not to undertake it. A simulation well done, however, can be the perfect summative experience in the empowerment training process.

The Scenario: Round 1--Forming the Service. Youth Escort Service Group

The neighborhood that you live in has a large number of elderly residents and a high rate of youth unemployment. A few months ago a group of youth got together and decided that they could help both the elderly people and themselves by setting up a Youth Escort Service that runs errands with or for senior citizens for minimum wage. After organizing yourselves into a formal group with a name and setting yourselves up in an office in a member's bedroom, you were ready to go public. You approached the neighborhood Senior Citizens Center with your idea.

To your surprise, you have discovered that the Seniors are against the idea. While they agree that the service would be helpful to frightened or housebound people, they wonder how youth would be screened for membership in the Youth Escort Service. They are afraid that "delinquent" youth will work for the service and do more harm than good. You realize immediately that the service will never get off the ground unless you involve the Seniors in helping you make the decision about how to screen Youth Escorts and thus win the Center's support. Your initial task is to overcome their resistance by:

1. Brainstorming how to act with Seniors so as to demonstrate your sincerity and maturity, then adopt this behavior in all your dealings with them.

2. Structuring your group so that you have clear ways to hold individual members accountable.

3. Develop through negotiation with the Seniors a way of selecting Youth Escort Service members that is acceptable to both of you.

Your objectives for the negotiation are to:

1. Demonstrate to the Seniors by the way you act that you understand their fears and are willing to be responsive to them.

2. Demonstrate to the Seniors by the way you act that you are capable of organizing the Service in a responsible way.

3. Not give in to the Seniors' prejudices about youth by refusing to develop selection methods that eliminate youth from the Service because they don't meet Seniors' unrealistic standards.

4. Not allow Seniors too much control of your business.

You have 15 minutes to organize your group and brainstorm your ideas for how to negotiate with the Seniors about the selection of Youth Escorts.

The Scenario: Round 1 -- Forming the Service. Senior Citizens Group

The neighborhood that you live in has a large number of elderly residents and a high rate of youth unemployment. A few months ago a group of youth got together and decided that they could both help the elderly people and themselves by setting up a Youth Escort Service that runs errands with or for senior citizens for minimum wage. After organizing themselves into a formal group with a name and setting themselves up in an office in a member's bedroom, they approached you with their idea.

You were initially surprised by and interested in the project. The young people's initiative impressed you and you had to admit that this could be a valuable service. So many of the elderly people in the neighborhood are afraid to go out alone or are physically unable to run major errands for themselves. Minimum wage is affordable, too, and maybe the Center could even set up a small fund to buy the Youth Escort's services for those seniors who can't afford it.

Still, the more you think about the idea, the more it worries you. Lots of the kids in this neighborhood are just punks. Old Roger Thomas was beaten up just last week by a gang of young thugs, and there are dozens of other stories of robberies and muggings that everyone knows were done by kids. Besides you're just not comfortable with young people today. They dress oddly, are unkempt, and are of every color of the rainbow. You'll sit down and talk with them, as a courtesy, because they've asked you to, but the idea of endorsing a service like this one, dreamed up and run completely by kids without any adult supervision, bothers you. It's just not right.

Your initial task is to explore the idea of a Youth Escort Service with the youth by:

1. Deciding how you, as seniors, would need the service to be organized and run before you'd buy into it.

2. Deciding how you want to conduct yourselves in a meeting with the youth.

Your objectives in the meeting are to:

1. Carefully observe the youth in the meeting to see if they meet your standards of respectability and trustworthiness.

2. Communicate your ideas to the youth about how the Service should be set up, particularly how Youth Escorts should be screened.

3. Avoid buying into the Service too hastily without taking plenty of time to mull over their proposals and solicit other seniors' ideas.

You have 15 minutes to brainstorm your "demand list" for the Youth Escort Service and to plan your strategy for the meeting.

**The Scenario: Round 1--Forming the Service.** City Hall Group

You are city officials. Among your number are the Mayor of the City, the Chief of Police, and several City Councilmen. You are happily working away at City Hall on the problems of the City, totally unaware of the events across town that are shaping a Youth Escort Service. Because there is an election coming up, however, and you are concerned about the vote, you have decided to spend as much time sitting in on community events as you can between now and November. There is a meeting of a very active neighborhood Senior Citizen Council tonight and, because of the growing importance of the senior vote, you're going to put in an appearance. You've heard that this may be an interesting session because it's rumored that a group of neighborhood kids are coming to try to convince the seniors to help them with a project.

Your initial task is to act as observers of the negotiation. Because of your knowledge of community affairs, you can evaluate such things as:

1. How sensitive the youth of the Youth Escort Service are to the concerns of the elderly.

2. How effective the youth are in communicating their needs and concerns to the seniors.

3. How appropriately youth behave in the meeting.

4. How creative both the youth and the seniors are able to be in designing a Youth Escort Service that is acceptable to both of them.

Before going into the meeting, take a few minutes to select a Mayor and Police Chief from among the members of the group.

Youth Escort Service Group
A.K.A. The Protectors

The Scenario: Round 2--Preserving the Service.

A year has gone by since the formal establishment of the Youth Escort Service. In that year you have been wildly successful in your work. (The youth of the service have responded to the support of the neighborhood by taking on more and more responsibility in the community.) Through their associations with elderly people they have learned an incredible amount about how terrifying it is to be alone and weak in the city, and they have acted upon this new knowledge by vastly expanding the purpose and services of the program. Today you are Community Protection, Incorporated. You have become an effective citizens' action group whose members patrol the streets and interrupt crimes in progress. The people of the neighborhood respect you. The police, however, disdain your help and are visibly hostile to you.

Now the police have raised questions that may severely limit the organization. You have been summoned to a meeting with the Mayor, members of City Council, and the Chief of Police to decide your future. Your objective for the meeting is to survive it.

In preparation for this session, brainstorm:

1. The reasons that the police are threatened by you and are trying to limit you.

2. The agendas of the Mayor and Council members coming into this meeting.

3. The power you have available to you coming into this meeting: Who supports you and why? What kind of influence can they wield? How can you mobilize other support in this fight?

4. Strategies for the meeting based on your analysis of the situation: What will <u>your</u> demands be? What do you have to offer that would possibly interest City government? How can you resist City Hall if it's bent on limiting you?

You have 15 minutes to analyze the situation, the motives of your opposition, and to decide how you're going to out-maneuver them.

The Scenario: Round 2--Preserving the Service. Senior Citizens Group

A year has gone by since the formal establishment of the Youth Escort Service. In that year those kids have been wildly successful in their work. The youth of the Service have responded to the support of the neighborhood by taking on more and more responsibility in the community. Through their associations with you people they have learned an incredible amount about how terrifying it is to be alone and weak in the city, and they have acted upon this new knowledge by vastly expanding the purpose and services of the program. Today they are Community Protection, Incorporated. They have become an effective citizens' action group whose members patrol the streets, and interrupt crimes in progress. You are incredibly grateful to them. They have greatly improved the quality of your lives. The police, however, disdain them and are visibly hostile to them.

Now the police want to limit the organization. The Protectors have been summoned to a meeting with the Mayor, members of City Council and the Chief of Police to discuss their future.

You have decided to attend the meeting to observe and silently lend your support to their efforts. At the very least, your feedback may help them to understand the issues that are being raised. Pay particular attention in the meeting to:

1. How well The Protectors understand the motives and strengths of the police and the denizens of City Hall.

2. How skillfully The Protectors are able to marshall their resources to meet power with power in the meeting. How creatively they take advantage of available openings.

3. How maturely The Protectors behave in the session. How effectively they communicate their concerns.

4. How creative The Protectors are able to be in offering compromise solutions that preserve their organization.

Before going into the meeting, take a few minutes to decide what else you will want to be observing.

The Scenario: Round 2--Preserving the Service. City Hall Group

A year has gone by since the formal establishment of the Youth Escort Service. You have all but forgotten the neighborhood Senior Citizens Center meeting that you attended that resulted in its formation. This morning, however, the Chief of Police dropped by the Mayor's Office to express his growing concern about the Service. The Service, he worried aloud, may be seriously overstepping its bounds. Instead of just running errands for little old ladies, the Service, which now calls itself Community Protection, Incorporated, is training members to patrol the streets and interrupt crimes in progress. The entire neighborhood respects the Protectors as the law. They have become tremendously powerful and have clear control of their section of the city.

Your immediate reaction to the situation is deep concern. While these youth may be doing a real service for their neighborhood, it is potentially dangerous to have private citizens groups take the law into their own hands. Members of The Protectors may be hurt and mistaken confrontations with armed police officers are a real possibility. Still the group may have too much neighborhood support for you to risk a public challenge to their efforts. You decide to call The Protectors in for a private negotiation session.

Your task is to devise a strategy for limiting the power of The Protectors without damaging your own political credibility. When this is over, you want the Police Department, the people of the neighborhood, and the citizens of the city to all be in your camp.

You have 15 minutes to brainstorm a list of demands, to decide how much compromise with this group you can afford, and to devise a strategy for gaining their acceptance of your point of view.

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